

# **GENDER BIAS IN SELECTED SHONA NOVELS**

by

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## DECLARATION

Student number: 31625215

I declare that **GENDER BIAS IN SELECTED SHONA NOVELS** is my own work and that all the sources that I have listed or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Herbert Zigara

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Zigara', is written over a horizontal line.

Date: 30-11-2016

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my wife Rue Zigara and my children Blessings, Grateful and Gracious for their support while compiling this project. They kept encouraging me throughout the entire study.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

In carrying out this study, I was assisted by many people. Of special mention is my supervisor, Prof Davie E. Mutasa whose constructive criticism and guidance gave shape to this study. Special thanks also go to Prof Jacob Mapara for his tireless guidance throughout the research project. Without these two accomplished scholars' advice the research would not have been possible. My gratitude also goes to the University of South Africa which offered me a FAB bursary that enabled me to pursue my postgraduate studies. I am also grateful to all my research participants. These are: authors of this research's selected Shona novels, Shona literature lecturers, Shona literature students and accomplished scholars who have also written their own Shona novels. Without their assistance this study could not have succeeded.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study sought to uncover gender bias in selected Shona novels and examine the manner in which authors present the subject. The major objectives were to identify the effects of hostile gender relations and assess Shona novel authors' commitments to promote healthy gender relations which are pre-requisites for national development. The study adopted the dual approach by fusing feminism with Afrocentricity as the literary tool of analysis. These theories served as lenses for exploring gender biases in selected Shona novels. The liberal feminism was the most relevant feminist theory to this study because it advocates more about inclusion and unrestricted participation of women in all spheres of social life. The research was anchored on the qualitative design. The methodology used to gather data for analysis involved interviewing three out of four authors of this research's selected Shona novels, eight Shona literature lecturers from teachers' colleges and universities in Zimbabwe as well as five accomplished scholars who have also written their own Shona novels. Questionnaires were administered to thirty two students, twenty from teachers' colleges and twelve from universities in Zimbabwe. The total number of all participants in this study was forty-eight and purposive sampling was used to come up with the sample. Data was analysed in descriptive form. This study has established that most Shona novelists are not gender neutral. While some authors are championing the emancipation of women others are perpetuating their marginalisation. Basing on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that Shona authors should be sensitised through workshops, seminars or conferences on the need to pen gender balanced novels if national development is to be realised. This would help the societies who are the consumers of such novels to be gender neutral through emulating the positive portrayal attributed to characters. The Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC), teachers' colleges and universities should approve gender neutral Shona novels so that students can have appropriate role models to emulate. It is envisaged that this research will be of great benefit to all those who will have the privilege to access it. Gained knowledge will help to extricate women from marginalisation and also promote healthy gender relations.

**KEY TERMS:** Gender bias, disparities, marginalisation, eradicate, feminism, patriarchy, socialisation, culture, gender relations and national development.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This study focuses on gender bias in selected Shona novels. Gender bias is defined by Gudhlanga and Chirimuuta (2012:37) as a social order in which women and men portray each other negatively, do not share the same opportunities and the same constraints on full participation in both the economic and domestic realm. Their definition tallies with that of Kendall (1998) who views gender bias as being portrayed negatively, disparity in status, power and prestige between people who are identified as women and men. From the above definitions, gender bias can simply be defined as portraying either men or women negatively. The purpose of this study is to uncover gender bias in selected Shona novels and examine the manner in which authors treat the subject in the best interest of social cohesion as well as national development. The chapter looks at the scope of the study and the background history of the study. It outlines the statement of the problem, aim of the study, objectives of the study as well as research questions. The chapter also examines the significance of the study, research methodology and ethical considerations. Definitions of key terms are also presented in this chapter.

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

According to Macionis (1989), Gordon (1995), Nyoni (2004:40) and Thabethe (2009) books have for years been regarded as important sources for the transmission of a people's

culture, traditions, values, societal beliefs and gender role expectations. Chinyowa (1998) echoes that some Shona novels advance patriarchal ideologies that impact on gender perceptions as women are viewed as weak, inferior and dependent. In the same vein, Dodo (2013) observes that Zimbabwean women have for a very long time endured the pain of living under patriarchal belief systems and traditions perpetuated by cultural practices and literature. These observations dovetail with Kambarami's (2006) scathing attacks on cultural practices and Shona beliefs as presented in Shona novels. This implies that literature is a vehicle through which gender inequalities and oppression are imposed on women by men through the patriarchal authority inherent in the system. It is against this background that, this study seeks to expose gender bias in selected Shona novels and explore the manner in which authors present the subject in the best interests of national development.

With regards to literature as a vehicle of social cohesion and development, Gordon (1995) and Mutekwe (2007:13) assert that literature's contribution to the society's well-being is invaluable. Similarly, Wasosa (2010:143) emphasises that literature stimulates debate and discussion on issues which threaten social cohesion as well as those which promote development. Mazuruse (2010:56) posits that art is a leading force in responding to contradictions and challenges. In the same vein, Thein (2012) avers that literature makes readers aware of the goings-on in an unjust world. This implies that literature has immense power to address profound psychological and sociological ramifications resulting from society's unjust practices. Since literature is capable of redressing a society's challenges, this study aims to identify gender bias in selected Shona novels and examine how authors handle the issue.

Since Zimbabwe's assumption of her democratic status, she has done much in her quest to eradicate gender imbalances. That is evidenced by her participation in conferences such as the Beijing Conference of 1995. In addition, Zimbabwe has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979). Despite the fact that she is part to many conventions on human rights and gender issues, it is regrettable that girls and women continue to endure marginalisation in many spheres of life such as

education and occupational sectors. School textbooks contribute to this problem through peddling stereotypes and traditional beliefs about men and women (Mutekwe, 2007:13). Shona novels are not exceptions in engendering power imbalances as they also join the whirlwind in foregrounding a motley of debilitating and adverse female images. While some Shona novels such as Mutasa's (2005) *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* and Nyawaranda's (1991) *Barika Ramashefu* have reasonably argued that women should not be disadvantaged on the basis of their sexuality as both genders have the same capabilities, others promote hostility between men and women. According to Wasosa (2010:133) for any society to develop, healthy gender relations should exist. Therefore, it becomes imperative for this study to explore how novelists treat this subject of gender bias.

Despite government efforts to eradicate gender disparities, male supremacy is pervasive and continues to permeate many aspects of social life (Mutekwe and Modiba, 2013:20). The researcher of this study once witnessed a painful and horrible life of a neighbour's daughter who was withdrawn from a secondary school to look after the family's livestock due to her father's inability to raise adequate money to pay school fees for his children. This was in the year 2008 when Zimbabwe's economy was nose-diving. After facing an unexpected retrenchment, the father told his daughter that she would get married and depend on her husband. He emphasized that, his two sons would ensure the survival of the family name through bringing additional members into the family hence the need to prioritise their concerns ahead of hers. That painful stance was also corroborated by the girl's mother. This attitude together with gender inequalities peddled in textbooks is in harmony with Zondi's (2010) argument that much has to be done and achieved in terms of correcting gender insensitivity. In light of the above observations, this study seeks to unearth gender bias in literature particularly Shona novels and explore novelists' commitments to advocate gender equity in their literary works of art.

Government's efforts to eradicate gender bias are complemented by women's movements such as the Girl Child Network (GCN) and Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) among others. Although gender bias is still evident in many spheres of social life within the Shona

community, the role of such organisations in creating an egalitarian society should be applauded. Championing the rights of women and emphasising the need to demolish male superiority has a propensity to unshackle women from the jaws of patriarchy. Patriarchy is viewed by society as retrogressive to prosperity. A situation in which women are liberated and male-female roles in society renegotiated is fundamental, not only for family cohesion but also for national development (Mazuruse, 2010:142). This emphasises the need for equality between men and women if societal prosperity is to be realised and sustained.

It is an undisputed fact that, male chauvinism and oppressive entrapment portrayed in literature can act as barriers to healthy gender relations if not carefully and thoughtfully articulated. It is therefore, the purpose of this research to unearth gender bias in selected Shona novels, and explore how the authors treat this theme.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

There is gender bias in certain Shona novels as women are cast in a negative way. The manner in which novelists present the subject can either promote hostilities or healthy gender relations. This study thus seeks to uncover gender bias in particular Shona novels and explore how authors treat the aspect of the marginalization of women.

## **1.3 Aim of the study**

This study aims to unearth gender biases in Shona novels and examine how the novelists present the issue. The main thrust of the research is on the novels that deal with the



periods before and after independence. Gender bias was entrenched during the colonial era with the migrant labour system in which men would leave rural areas in search of employment opportunities in urban areas. Men were thus seen as superior and providers for the family. On the other hand women were demoted to the provided for inferior. So, colonialism created the demotion of women to their current subservient role. It is therefore, against this background of patriarchal authority which was propped up by various factors that this research seeks to unveil disparities between men and women in certain Shona novels and examine how the novelists present the matter in their literary works of art. As long as authors continue to cast women in a negative way, gender biases will also continue to be widened and that may ultimately be catastrophic to national development.

### **1.3.1 Objectives of the study**

The major objectives of this research are to:

- 1) Investigate the origins of gender biases in Shona society.
- 2) Unmask gender biases in selected Shona novels.
- 3) Assess authors' commitment to the promotion of healthy gender relations and national development through their novels.
- 4) Identify the effects of hostile gender relations.
- 5) Outline steps taken by the Zimbabwe government to narrow gender disparities.

### **1.3.2 Research questions**

- 1) What are the historical roots of gender bias among the Shona people?
- 2) What are the causes of gender bias in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwean Shona novels?
- 3) How effective are Zimbabwean Shona novelists in promoting healthy gender relations?
- 4) Can the negative portrayal of males and females in Shona novels adversely affect national development?
- 5) Which steps are being taken by the Zimbabwean government to eradicate gender inequalities?

### **1.3.3 Significance of the study**

A lot of researches on gender bias have been carried out in the fields of Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology and Gender Studies among others but to the researcher's knowledge little has been done in the Shona discipline. Therefore, this study seeks to add and widen more literature in the area of gender bias in Shona novels.

In Shona literature, the aspect of gender bias has been studied by other scholars who have merely and largely concentrated on listing gender biases without attempting to positively portray women and their image in pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe. This study seeks to give a more positive image of both sexes which is vital for national prosperity. This

perspective is given prominence by Furusa (1998:79) who echoes that, "Africa will only develop when her men and women pick up hoes and shovels, mix mortar and mould bricks that lead to their vision of the future."

Research in the area of gender bias in Shona novels has been narrowed to the area of prostitution particularly by Wasosa (2010). Muwati (2006) concentrated on HIV and AIDS and very little is devoted to gender bias. Mazuruse's (2010) dissertation has a small section on gender bias which touched only on two novelists. Zondi (2013) focuses mainly on culture and cultural practices as agents of gender disparities in *Uvalo Lwezinhlozi* and *Nervous Conditions*. This study therefore, departs from surfacing the aspect of gender bias but deepen an understanding of the complementary role of both sexes for national prosperity. By examining how novelists treat the aspect of gender bias, it would have taken a holistic approach to the marginalisation of women by men in society.

It is a fact that writers handle the aspect of gender bias differently. While others show negative portrayal of women throughout their literary works of art, others deviate from that route and avoid treating women as the other 'sex'. The portrayal of males and females by authors can be a source of problems faced by men and women in society as gender inequalities can be entrenched in that way. This research is significant in that, it examines whether creative artists are conscious enough to effectively play their part by generating functional messages which are crucial for sustainable development. According to Wasosa (2010:142), no society can realise economic and social-political sustainability when women are shown to be in conflict with men. Describing the importance of male-female relationship, Aldridge (2007) emphasises that male-female relationships are indispensable to the maintenance and development of human society. The bond is an essential one and serves to cement the unity of the family and nation at large. These bonds are the indicators of the quality of social life and preserve the cohesiveness of the group as a fundamental unit of the nation. This implies that literature, owing to its fluidity and flexibility determines the nation's capacity to define, defend and develop its interests. This study therefore, shows that the novelist's style of writing is essential if a society is to be taken to greater heights. In

other words, the cultivation of positive gender relations is a recipe for the society's well-being.

Since Shona literature is taught and examined in Zimbabwean schools, teachers' colleges and universities, this study would be of significance to various stakeholders in the Zimbabwean education system. Teachers and learners are given an insight on how gender bias culminates in the creation of a patriarchal society. Equipped with such knowledge, teachers and lecturers may become gender sensitive and champion the struggle for women's emancipation not only at institutions where they work but also in their respective communities and the country at large. Through prescribed Shona literature, learners at schools and tertiary institutions are socialised on the importance of gender parity. Even in Shona speaking communities, people who may happen to get the privilege of being conscientised through reading this study may be persuaded to advocate for a gender balanced society. Furthermore, they may act as a buffer against the escalating rate of women abuse, enslavement and ill-treatment.

Zimbabwe's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's curriculum designers who play a role in determining input of text and images in other textbooks from pre-school up to Advanced Level may be influenced to approve gender balanced content for the benefit of current and future generations. Even the Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC), teachers' colleges and universities may be influenced to approve gender neutral Shona novels so that students can have appropriate role models to emulate. Therefore, this study may be a turning point to a totally gender neutral curriculum not only in Shona but also in other subject areas.

It is envisaged that this project would not be of great benefit to the Zimbabwe government alone but also social organizations and women's movements such as the Girl Child Network and Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA). The researcher would encourage his university to avail copies of his dissertation to these Non-Governmental Organizations. These organizations champion the rights of women and the need to eradicate gender disparities.

Thus, it is hoped that, upon completion of this piece of work such organisations may be encouraged to propel to greater heights in their quest to uproot the monopolisation of many aspects of life by men.

The researcher grew up in an extremely patriarchal Shona society in which women were regarded as second class citizens. It is against this background that the research wants to conscientise the society that the actualisation of women's rights is fundamental for the development of any society. In other words, the research intends to contribute in extricating women from the deadly jaws of patriarchy and promote healthy gender relations which are a pre-requisite for national development.

According to Muwati (2006:2), literature should promote and advance ethical attitudes in society rather than a brazen patriarchal modality. This is seconded by Brumfit (1981) who asserts that, literature promotes ethical and humanitarian attitudes among people. This study is therefore, significant in that it would show that literature can foster unity in society through the way it portrays men and women. It can be used to promote and encourage good and admirable attitudes among Shona people through condemning vices and ill-treatment of women in the selected Shona novels. Through the characters they read about in Shona novels, people are bound to introspect and may consequently appreciate the importance of Shona literature in fostering unity, solidarity, harmony and cohesion as well as removing social vices, adverse behaviour and immorality. In other words, the research is targeting attitudinal change among people.

Another significant reason for embarking on this study is that the research is intended to develop critical and analytical skills in present and future generations. Analytical skills which revolve around the plot can be appreciated if artistically inculcated and tactfully instilled.

Again, the researcher wants to leave a mark in the academic arena upon which other researchers who intend to study more on gender bias can find a platform to do so.

## 1.4 Definition of key terms

It is imperative to point out that only brief and working definitions would be given for the purposes of clarifying how these terms would be used in the research. The terms are defined according to how they would be used in this research.

Some of the key terms are: Feminism, gender, culture, patriarchy, matriarchy, bias, sex, eradicate, independence, literary work of art, colonialism and subservience.

**Feminism:** a movement that challenges the origins of the oppressive gender relations against women and attempts to develop strategies to change these relations so that women can be accorded the same rights, chances and power as men. Movements which champion the rights of women in Zimbabwe have a feminist orientation.

**Gender:** an individual's personal psychological experience of being a male or female. Gender roles are socially constructed and institutionalised.

**Culture:** people's way of life. It includes among others, architecture, behaviours, beliefs, values, marriage, language and symbols.

**Patriarchy:** any set of social relationships in which men dominate women. It is any system of male domination and male power facilitated through institutions in society.

**Matriarchy:** the reversal of any system of male domination and male power facilitated through institutions in society.

**Bias:** any attempt to portray males and females negatively or positively against each other in many aspects of social life.

**Sex:** visible external sexual organs that describe a person's biological maleness or femaleness. Sex does not limit one's potential to perform tasks. Feminists argue that, women should not be disadvantaged on the basis of their sexuality but capability.

**Eradicate:** to remove gender biases completely from many spheres of social life. Feminists want gender biases and other overt social inequalities eradicated.

**Independence:** a state of sovereign rule whereby people are in firm control of their social, political, cultural and economic wellbeing without being governed or ruled by another country. Taking control of the country's wealth from colonialists is economic independence while taking over power is political independence.

**Literary work of art:** the way through which writers express their ideas through poetry, drama, novels and other forms. Modern Shona novels are some of the Shona literary works of art through which writers express their ideas.

**Colonialism:** a situation through which indigenous people are ruled or governed by another country. Such people lose their social, political, cultural and economic independence. Zimbabwe is a former British colony.

**Subservience:** obeying others without questioning. Feminists challenge women's subservience to men by advocating for the eradication of gender bias and all forms of inequalities in many spheres of social life. They argue that women should not be subservient to men since they are equal partners in society.

## **1.5 Research design and methodology**

### **1.5.1 Research design**

The research adopts the qualitative design as opposed to the quantitative design. The qualitative design entails looking in-depth at non-numerical data (De Vos, 2002:360).

Sinkovics, Penz and Ghauri (2008:967) emphasise the core aspect of quality that is central in qualitative research design as the researcher takes a deep, quality look at the phenomenon. Thus, the qualitative design involves exploring issues that are not quantifiable such as feelings, attitudes, beliefs and emotions.

The researcher deems it entirely suitable to use the qualitative design because it has a couple of merits. According to Creswell (1994) qualitative research occurs in natural settings where human behaviour and events occur. In this study, the researcher undertook the text analysis, conducted interviews and administered questionnaires. The qualitative design is significant in that, it enables the researcher to enter into the inner recesses of individuals as they express themselves using flexible language (Anney, 2014:274).

According to Buchler and Puttergill (1997), it is generally easy to understand qualitative data without the sweat most people have from statistical analysis. Neuman (2000) recommends qualitative research design because data collection is not generated by pre-existing hypotheses; the hypothesis is generated as the research progresses. Such qualities of qualitative research design made the researcher go the qualitative way.

### **1.5.2 Methodology**

Kothari (2004:8) defines research methodology which he also refers to as research methods as a way to systematically solve the research problem using research instruments. The above definition tallies with that of Burns and Grove (2003:488) who aver that methodology includes the design, setting, sample, methodological limitations and the data collection and analysis techniques in a study. In this study, methodology or research methods refer to ways of collecting, organising and interpreting data.

The following methods were used in this research:



### 1.5.2.1 Text analysis

The researcher used primary sources based on selected Shona novels with the theme to do with gender bias. The selected novels are: Mutasa's *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* (2005), Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964), Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) and Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996). These novels were chosen because of the author's familiarity with them.

A textual analysis of the content of these Shona novels was made to show the gender bias portrayed in them. These texts provided examples which were used to illustrate the ideas raised by this research and also substantiating the researcher's findings. Where possible, cross references were used with other artists since this was fundamental in establishing the recurring trend of gender bias. Secondary sources especially from history textbooks were referred to as they portrayed how pre-colonial and colonial gender relations were like. Secondary sources were useful as they validated arguments made and at the same time complemented primary sources. It is important in this research to point out that only valid and secondary sources with information relevant to the research topic were considered for reference purposes. Various subjects and scholarly works were also consulted in different chapters to show a broader picture of gender bias in many spheres of social life.

Theses, dissertations, critical works, media reports, pamphlets by non-governmental organisations, journals, magazines, newspapers, conference papers, published and unpublished articles were used extensively to illuminate some of the ideas on gender bias in the selected Shona novels. This provided the study with a strong base of arguments as well as exploring how authors treat the aspect of male dominance over women. Pictures, descriptive and analytical information from history textbooks which show that pre-colonial African people were holistic, organised and living in harmony were helpful in the study. This helped this research to be realistic in outlook and not relying on assumptions and personal

idiosyncrasies. Reference to theorists and scholars on African literature and their notions on gender bias in Shona novels provided a strong framework for the study.

#### **1.5.2.2 Interviews**

The researcher formally interviewed three out of four authors of this research's selected Shona novels, eight Shona literature lecturers from teachers' colleges and universities in Zimbabwe as well as five accomplished scholars who have also written their own Shona novels. The total number of all interviewees was sixteen. The researcher used the semi-structured interview that falls between the structured and the unstructured interviews. Its anchorage on the structured and unstructured interviews as well as some measure of flexibility that it gave the researcher when responding to answers of the interviewees are aspects which made it to outshine others in this study. Owing to this advantage, the researcher deemed it suitable to use in this study. Authors' views were crucial in understanding the issues and concerns of writers in their own words. The selection of lecturers and accomplished authors for the interview technique was done to tap their expertise in the field of Shona literature. The researcher was satisfied with the number of interviewees which he felt was adequate to provide data for comparison with other data collection instruments. The researcher's aim was to entirely employ the face-to-face interviews. Gwimbi (2003) recommends face to face interview because it enables one to observe non-verbal responses and interpret them usefully. However, where face-to-face interviews were not possible, telephonic interviews were resorted to. According to Makore-Rukuni (2001), using the interview technique gives one an opportunity to probe, prod and cajole to solicit more information. The researcher used the voice recorder and sometimes relied on taking down notes during interviews.

### **1.5.2.3 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were administered to thirty-two students, twenty from teachers' colleges and twelve from universities in Zimbabwe. The number was deemed sufficient to gather required data for comparison with other data gathering techniques. The questionnaire survey was used in this study because of its ability to collect data from a considerable number of respondents over a relatively short period of time (Mhlanga and Ncube, 2003). Students were chosen for questionnaire administration simply to vary and allocate the researcher's purposively sampled participants to the available data gathering techniques. The researcher's aim was to personally deliver and collect all questionnaires from the respondents. However, there were two participants who were not reached easily. Questionnaires were sent to them, completed and returned.

About questionnaires, Chikoko and Mhloyi (1995:69) say, "A questionnaire is a document containing questions designed to solicit information appropriate for analysis." A similar definition is given by Mhlanga and Ncube (2003:59) who emphasise that, "It is a document consisting of question items that solicit information from a subject, which is suitable for research analysis." This was a useful method of collecting data since questionnaires are based on concrete personal experiences different from the world of fiction found in some literary works of art. Nel, Radel and Loubser (1988) recommend the use of questionnaires in that results can be replicated while Leedy (1993) asserts that questionnaires ensure confidentiality, privacy and anonymity. Therefore, respondents were able to freely provide useful information in this study.

## 1.6 Scope of the study

The study is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is the introduction to the research. It presents the research problem or area of investigation, aims and objectives of the study, research questions and methods, justification and scope of the research, definitions of key terms and conclusion.

Chapter two deals specifically with literature review. It reviews literature on previous studies in relation to the topic of gender bias in selected Shona novels. The chapter is based on the premise that, the more one reads about research done by others on the same topic or related aspects, the better one can approach and tackle his or her own research.

Chapter three deals with the theoretical perspective and the historical background of gender bias. After discussing the historical roots of gender bias, it will take a cultural perspective to gender bias. This is so because feminists have for a long time seen culture as a contributor to the denigration and suppression of women.

Chapter four covers an overview of the research design and methodology used in the study. The discussion mainly focuses on the population sampling, data collection and data analysis. The last part of the section dwells on measures taken to provide trustworthiness in qualitative research.

Chapter five is on data presentation and analysis. It presents the textual analysis from novels, questionnaires and interviews as well as the discussion on gender bias in selected Shona novels. The analysis aspect closely focuses on how selected writers handle the issue of gender in their literary works of art. Evidence is generated from the contents of the following novels: Mutasa's *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* (2005), Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964), Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) and Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996). Some of the steps which are being taken by the Zimbabwe government to eradicate gender imbalances are outlined in this chapter.

Chapter six is the conclusion that evaluates the extent to which selected Shona novelists have succeeded or failed in promoting and advocating gender equity. It looks at the major findings of the researcher about the authors' efforts to inculcate that gender is just a social construct which can be replaced by power shifts depicting women as equal partners in many aspects of social life. Recommendations for this study as well as those for further research are given in this chapter.

## **1.7 Ethical considerations**

Social research is guided by ethics. According to David and Sutton (2004), the term ethics refers to the science of morality. Expressed in other words, ethics in research involves the study of what is right and wrong. Ethical considerations are critical where people are either directly or indirectly involved in the research as they contribute significantly to the smooth flow of the study. It is therefore, imperative for the researcher to factor in the aspects of right and wrong conduct.

For this study, the principles of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, beneficence and social protocol were considered. Research should benefit the parties involved. This ethical principle is termed beneficence (Chilisa and Preece, 2005). In this study, the researcher availed the benefits of the research to the participants who included authors, accomplished scholars as well as literature students and their tutors. By informing the participants on how the research would benefit them, the researcher won their consent to take part in the study.

The researcher honoured the participants' freedom of choice to be involved in the research. Locke quoted by Franckfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) purports that being free is a natural right of participants and any restrictions on freedom must be carefully justified. In research circles the participants' freedom to choose to participate in the research is known

as informed consent (David and Sutton, 2004). As a way of observing the principle of informed consent, the researcher informed the participants of his intention to interview or supply them with questionnaires at least a week before the scheduled day. By doing so, the researcher aimed to ensure that all participants voluntarily chose to be involved in the research.

Apart from informed consent, anonymity was observed in this study. Anonymity refers to the situation where the researcher does not know or record the details of those participating as informants in the research (Dooley, 2004). In this study, participants were not asked to divulge their names during interviews except for accomplished scholars who are already known by the researcher. Questionnaires did not compel participants to furnish their identity details. In this way, anonymity of participants was guaranteed.

Confidentiality refers to the idea that the information given by the researcher is not revealed publicly (Franckfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). To win the confidence of the participants, the researcher assured them that the information to be provided would strictly be used for research purposes. In this way, the principle of confidentiality was adhered to. The researcher indicated to the participants both orally and in writing that confidentiality would be strictly observed. Each interview and questionnaire instrument contained a section that spelt out the researcher's commitment to observing strict confidentiality.

The research cannot be complete without following the social protocol. The researcher obtained written permission from the University of South Africa's Department of African Languages that was used to seek permission from various institutions to carry out this study. Written permission was also obtained from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as well as the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology in Zimbabwe before engaging schools and institutions of higher learning for research purposes. The permission was essential as it facilitated the smooth flow of this study.

The researcher also undertook to acknowledge all sources consulted to avoid plagiarism, timeously give feedback to respondents on the findings as well as to present data as

accurately as possible to avoid deceit and distortion to the readers and the research subjects.

Ethical considerations were fundamental in this social research as they ensured its smooth flow and enhanced its validity and reliability.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

The introduction has established that literature mirrors society and it is through writers such as those of Shona novels that healthy gender relations among Shona people can be realised. Where no efforts are made to correct gender disparities, a nation's development is curtailed. The first chapter gave the foundation on which the whole research rests, illuminating the scope of the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study. It has also presented research questions, and significance of the study, definition of key terms, research methodology and ethical considerations. It has been noted that gained knowledge on the importance of gender equality will help to eradicate the marginalisation of either men or women and promote healthy gender relations which are a pre-requisite for national development. The qualitative research design has been adopted and the use of text analysis, interviews and questionnaires together enhanced complementarities, expansion and corroboration of research findings.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter reviews literature on previous studies in relation to gender bias in selected Shona novels. The chapter is based on the principle that, the more one reads research done by others on the same topic or related aspects, the better one can approach and tackle his or her own research. The main purpose of literature review is not only to build on the strengths of existing studies, but also to fill in the gaps, pitfalls and weaknesses of earlier research as well as criticising some of the views expressed by preceding scholars. Gaps, pitfalls and weaknesses show that the topic under study is researchable. The review of related literature in this dissertation hinges on the views adopted from the feminist and Afrocentricity theories which serve as lenses for exploring gender bias in selected Shona novels.

#### **2.1 Literature review on gender bias in selected Shona novels**

This research is not pioneering work on gender bias since there are other researchers who have explored the issue before. The review is anchored on the funnel approach which



begins with the global or world perspective followed by the African view and lastly the Zimbabwean perspective.

### **2.1.1 World perspective**

After analysing data collected as part of the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Parry (2012) concludes that teachers tend to rate white girls' mathematical abilities lower than those of white male students, even when the girls' grades and test scores are comparable to boys. Thus, the evidence found showed consistent bias against white females, which although relatively small in magnitude, suggests that teachers hold the belief that mathematics is easier for white males than it is for white females. These findings are consistent with those of Gentile (2013), who analysed a study conducted by the American Research Universities as well as another funded by the National Science Foundation of America and concluded that, in addition to gender bias in staffing at workplaces, both male and female scientists view gender discrimination as a factor in women's decision whether to choose a science related career or to choose biology over physics, engineering and technology.

While these scholars demonstrated that there is gender discrimination in pedagogy involving mathematics and science as well as career choices and hiring of staff at workplaces, this study investigates the prevalence of gender insensitivity in selected Shona novels. Thus, it takes a different trajectory as it focuses on Shona novels which are in a different geographical locality and cultural group. The discussion is largely centred on how novelists treat the aspect of gender inequality amongst Zimbabweans, who are Africans. Although they fall into the broad category of Africans, most Zimbabweans are a closely knit cultural group with particular, peculiar and specific orientations. This study examines them first as Africans and more closely as per their particular, peculiar or specific orientation. It is

evident from earlier studies that gender bias tends to be pervasive in diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. This study goes beyond simply unearthing gender biases by engaging critically with possible strategies for changing the mindsets of authors of Shona novels so that they become ambassadors for achieving gender equality in society in the best interest of fostering social harmony.

Hill, Cobertt and Rose (2010) note that, men continue to outnumber women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. They blame social and environmental factors for the under-representation of women in these fields. In the same vein Hyde, Lindberg, Linn, Ellis and Williams (2008:494) observe that, the under-representation of women at the highest levels of mathematics, the physical sciences and engineering “is caused by stereotypes peddled by parents and teachers that girls and women lack mathematical ability.” While these scholars raise fundamental factors which revolve around socialisation, they did not sufficiently suggest how the under-representation of women in the identified fields can be resolved. While they concur that female and male roles constructed through sexual division of labour track girls and boys into different fields, they tend to concentrate on blaming the stereotypes peddlers rather than offering tangible solutions to the predicament. This study moves a step further by seeking to sensitise authors of literary works of art and prescribed books for the school curriculum on the need to write gender neutral books which have the capacity to dismantle patriarchal notions inculcated during the socialisation process.

Monique and Eck (2001) analysed surveys published by various researchers during the 1990s and concluded that there are gender differences which favour males in Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) teaching and learning in primary and secondary education. Like Monique and Eck, Sanders (2005) laments women’s low representation in technology related fields. These accomplished scholars come to a consensus that learners’ access, participation and performance in technology learning and activities is tilted in favour of males. In other words, women’s under-representation in technology related fields is a major worry to the world at large. While these scholars address the representational aspect

in education and labour sectors, this study is anchored on discursive aspects of gender bias using Shona novels as a lens for analysis.

After collating results from various researchers and undertaking their own study, Jovanovic and King (2010) found that boys perform more than girls in science classes. Their findings match with those of Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham and Handelsman (2012:52) who found that “a stark gender disparity persists within academic Science.” The scholars outlined measures that should be instituted to help close this gap. One of the measures suggested is the increased training and retention of women who are starkly under-represented within many fields of science, especially among the professoriate. While these scholars’ researches focus on their respective countries, this study focuses on gender issues peculiar to the Zimbabwean situation. Furthermore, this research outlines measures being taken to curtail gender inequalities in Zimbabwe.

According to Kernworthy and Malami (1999), gender inequality persists in society and politics is one of the arenas in which it remains most pronounced. This implies that gender bias is pervasive in many facets of social life and the new world Shona novel is one of them, hence the need to undertake this study. Though the study by these scholars is closely linked to the political perspective, it nevertheless provides this study with a basis to approach and explore it from a fresh perspective.

Aldridge (2007) stresses that gender bias negatively affects male-female relations in society as a result of the manner in which they are portrayed. Christ (2013) echoes the same sentiments by saying that patriarchy creates male dominance, resulting in sour male-female relations. While Sy (2012) gives a sound discussion on gender inequality in education, she, like Aldridge and Christ did not convincingly discuss how the negative portrayal of women helps to entrench gender inequality and promote hostility to the detriment of societal development.

Barrow (2005) observes that what students learn at school depends on gender ideologies embedded in the curriculum. This observation dovetails with that of Meyer (2008) who

asserts that patriarchal values embodied in the school curriculum disadvantage girls more than boys. Although both scholars regard books as a major vehicle through which gender biases are perpetuated, and that they should be the starting point in society's quest to achieve gender neutrality, they do not take their discussions beyond just identifying gender biases in the curriculum. This study attempts to fill in the gap by adding significant new insights to the subject of gender bias by projecting a positive image of the girl child as well as the accomplishments of women in the public domain in order to change the status quo.

Furthermore, this study brings to the fore the vital role of literature in dismantling the notion that men are superior to women. If this notion is eradicated an even playing field for both sexes and gender neutrality in society may be achieved. In other words, this study seeks to positively influence authors into gender neutral writers, educators into gender neutral curriculum implementers and literature into gender a neutral medium of information dissemination. According to Goldin (2009), society can only be stable if literature shuns divisive tendencies and departs from stoking up tensions. Thus, literature is expected to instil in people the notion that gender does not count when it comes to performance in any sphere of social life.

#### **2.1.1.1 The history of gender bias**

Jayachandran (2014) discusses the roots of gender inequality in developing countries with particular focus on cultural factors that prop up favouritism towards males. Although he examines an array of pertinent cultural issues with regards to gender biases, his study takes a global outlook. Unlike Jayachandran, this study considers exploring in detail the historical background of gender bias from pre- to post-independence Zimbabwe. In other words, this research endeavours to examine the history of gender bias with reference to Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular.

Some scholars largely trace the emergence of gender bias to history dating as far back as the slave trade up to the post-colonial period in African countries. According to Tang (2007) most women throughout the course of history have essentially been slaves even when belonging to higher social classes. Tang points out that until very recently women throughout Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa were voiceless and had no input into political, religious or cultural lives. Although there are exceptions as observed in the case of Queen Nzinga in modern day Angola as well as Nyamazana, the Nguni warrior queen who defeated the Rozvi Chirisamhuru, women are portrayed as having insignificant input in the political realm. It is this observation which has motivated this researcher to seek to unveil gender biases in Shona novels. A succinct history of gender bias in Zimbabwe would be discussed later in this study.

#### **2.1.1.2 Gender and religion**

Religion is one aspect that cannot be ignored when tackling the issue of gender bias. This is so because, as part of culture, religious practices are some of the major contributors to gender discrimination not only in Zimbabwe, but the world over. According to Thabethe (2009), religion contributes to the control and suppression of women as it is a powerful source of male dominance over females. Thabethe stresses that the portrayal of most women in most religions is usually negative or rather denigrating. On inheritance, the Qur'an (4:11) asserts that "The male shall have the equal of the portion of two females." Again the Qur'an (2:228) makes it clear that "...men are a degree above them [women]." These views have given this study not only direction with regards to the subject under examination, but also the impetus to profoundly explore the manner in which religion contributes to the suppression of women in society. However, the research would largely concentrate on issues peculiar to the Zimbabwean situation.

### **2.1.1.3 Agents of socialisation**

It is imperative to explore the role of agents of socialisation in this study because they do not only engineer the differentiation of male and female social roles but also influence authors' vision and version of gender.

According to Hammond, Cheney and Pearsey (2015), socialisation is the process by which people learn characteristics of their group's norms, values, attitudes and behaviours. They stress that socialisation, which begins at birth and moves forward into adulthood as being responsible for the social construction of reality. The constructed social reality is then reinforced through the peer group, education, the mass media and religion.

These accomplished scholars identified three levels of socialisation which are: primary, secondary and adult socialisation. Primary socialisation which is the most important socialisation takes place early in life. Thus, it begins at birth and moves forward until the beginning of school years. Secondary socialisation occurs in later childhood and adolescence when children go to school and also come under the influence of non-family members. This level runs concurrently with primary socialisation. Adult socialisation occurs as we assume adult roles such as husband, wife and employee. It is profoundly influenced by both primary and secondary socialisation.

The implication is that people's patriarchal notions which are socially constructed during interaction can also be socially deconstructed if authors present positive and balanced images of men and women in their literary works of art. Thus, if authors write gender sensitive books, society is likely to be gender sensitive as a result of the literature's influence in deconstructing the already enacted negative social notions.

#### **2.1.1.3.1 The family**

Hill et al (2010) blame social and environmental factors for the under-representation of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Their argument dovetails with that of Hyde et al (2008:494) who aver that, the under-representation of women at the highest levels of mathematics, the physical sciences and engineering is caused by stereotypes peddled by parents and other factors that girls and women lack mathematical ability. These scholars single out the family as being responsible for socialising girls that they are not as good as boys when it comes to performance in science, technology and engineering and mathematics subjects. From their findings, the implication is that, the family through the socialisation process is partly responsible for the under-representation of women in the identified fields.

Wood (2009) castigates parents for helping their daughters and sons learn their gender by being gentler with their daughters and rougher with their sons. They also give girls dolls to play with and boys are given guns. This implies that parents' differential treatment of boys and girls creates gender inequalities within the family as boys are viewed as tough, strong and outgoing as compared to girls. Thus, gender role stereotyping has its roots in primary socialisation where the family is responsible for constructing and perpetuating male dominance at an early age. The family is therefore responsible for constructing and reinforcing existing gender imbalances and injustices that pervades many spheres of social life the world over.

#### **2.1.1.3.2 Education**

Barrow (2005) observes that what students learn at school depends on gender ideologies embedded in the curriculum. This observation merges with that of Meyer (2008:31) who asserts that patriarchal values embodied in the school curriculum disadvantage girls more than boys. Both scholars regard books as a major vehicle through which gender biases are perpetuated, and that they should be the starting point in society's quest to achieve gender neutrality. This brings us to the conclusion that the education system creates an uneven playing field in terms of not only subject choices at school but also with reference to career paths to follow.

Booher-Jennings (2008:149) criticises schools for being significant sources of gender socialisation. Even in this modern day, teachers and curricula send out various messages that reinforce the qualities traditionally ascribed to females and males, and students engage in recess and other extra-curricular activities that do the same thing. This implies that schools socialise children by teaching them not only their formal curricula but also the hidden curriculum that perpetuates gender imbalances constructed at home. Thus, the school culture can be said to be responsible for tracking girls into the feminine domain and boys into the masculine domain.

#### **2.1.1.3.3 The peer group**

Barrow (2005) observes that as children play, they exhibit ideologies about gender that are imbedded in the curriculum in both explicit and hidden forms. Since the hidden curriculum includes gendered and patriarchal ideologies that schools subtly transmit to learners, its input may be extremely adverse though not overt. This emphasises the fact that, influential



ideologies are not necessarily those formally acknowledged and publicly articulated through the official documents, but those that are subliminally ingested as part of the general or professional enculturation as well. Thus peers should therefore, be conscious for what they say or do may be a recipe for gender disparities. In other words, gender imbalances constructed and reinforced during peer interaction can affect learners' access to, and performance in, perceived masculine and feminine subjects.

Agnew (2007) notes that our peers influence our tastes by not only socialising us positively but also inducing us to negative and violent social norms. This implies that peer interaction, just like the family, education and the media has a propensity to socialise girls into believing that they are inferior to boys. Therefore, male superiority complex, gender role stereotypes and other gender imbalances which are a result of primary socialisation can be perpetuated by peer socialisation. Thus, the peer group can create conditions which disadvantage girls and restrict their participation in many spheres of life.

It is the author's duty to dismantle the negative enacted social roles and substitute them with the progressive mentality that men and women are equal and their complementary roles ensure the survival of humanity. Achievement in social life is based on capability as opposed to gender. If people bear that in mind, a gender neutral society can be achieved.

#### **2.1.1.3.4 The mass media**

A number of studies have revealed the negative portrayal of women in the print media, television advertising, soap operas and dramatic series. Studies on images of women in magazines by Carter and Weaver (2003) and Byerly and Ross (2006) reveal that stereotypical images have been remarkably consistent over the past three decades. Men are portrayed as authority icons whose desires are realised through the beautiful but subordinate females. Prominent in their studies is the issue of good looks by ensuring a

regular diet, slimming tips and helping articles on catching and keeping a boyfriend, to mention just but a few of the many things women would do in order to please men. Those women involved in paid work are confined to less important work such as modelling and fashion, while men are involved in prestigious occupations such as engineering and technology which symbolise their power.

Television advertising has numerous studies on the portrayal of gender. A major observation made in these studies is the prevalence of sexism in advertising, whereby beautiful or naked women become a package of the product being advertised (Pillay, 2008; Ali and Shahwar, 2011). There is a general consensus among these scholars that the television medium seeks to define women in relation to men, whilst men are defined in relation to their work, their creativity or play. Ali and Shuhwar (2011) argue that the commercialisation of the media has been largely responsible for stereotyping women and has caused a lot of harm to the image of women within the society. Women are generally portrayed in limited roles than their male counterparts. This negatively affects the self-esteem of women in society.

According to Ingham (2007), since the setting of soap operas is mainly the domestic environment (mainly indoors) an impression has been created that the home is the place where a woman's expertise is mostly valued, thereby reinforcing the stereotype that a woman's place is in the home. Dramatic series according to Harper (1998) portray women as being better suited to being married and keeping a home rather than venturing in the world of business or politics. The main stereotypes of women characters in drama series have been found to be the good wife, prostitute, victim, decoy, witch and mother (Harper, 1998). These media images have a negative impact particularly on young women who do not have positive role models to emulate in society. Kaul and Sahni (2010) argue that women are projected as tools of glamour and fashion in television series. This creates the impression that women's roles are illusionary. Thus, the female body is displayed and filmed for the male gaze in order to provide erotic pleasure and ultimately a sense of control over her.

The study of the portrayal of women in both print and electronic media is important to this study in that, it depicts the pervasiveness of gender bias in various spheres of social life. Thus, modern Shona novels, magazines, television advertising, soap operas and dramatic series are tools of socialisation, among many, which patriarchal societies utilise to advance men and marginalise women. It is necessary for gender biases in literature and the stereotypes in the media, to be eradicated because they are harmful not only to adult women, but also to the girl child who will grow up without any positive role models in society. This study encourages the society to curtail men's perceptions of women as the weaker sex by targeting the purveyors and sources of patriarchy, which are authors of books and the media among others.

### **2.1.2 African perspective**

Mogu (1999) points out that in many societies women are not considered as important and recognised human beings who must be accorded respect and dignity. Mogu also stresses that even male authors tend to create women characters that are docile and devoid of reasoning. This implies that writers seem to advance the women irrationality and destructive mentality. One example that can be given is that of Mukwazhi in *Zvibaye Woga* (1996:7) who uses Cephas' brother to articulate his vision and version of women. He says:

*Unoona munin'ina chinhu chinonzi mukadzi chinonetsa kunzwisisa zvekuti ukateerera zvaanotaura nguva zhinji unoparadzana nehama dzako ukasara wave woga...zvino iwe uri murume unofanira kufunga pachirume.*

(You see my young brother, a woman is a very difficult thing to understand and if you take what she says, you will be separated from your relatives... now, you are a man and you must reason like one.)

Such a statement tends to create sour gender relations which threaten social cohesion and national development. This is a testimony that we are confronted by males who come to a conclusion that women are irrational. It is in this context that the author tends to be accused of presenting women as docile and devoid of proper reasoning. Thus, literature ceases to be a vehicle of social cohesion as it creates a gulf between men and women.

This justifies the study's aim of exploring how novelists present the issue of gender bias in the best interest of promoting equality between men and women. Thus, this study encourages authors to conduct self-introspection and shun spearheading patriarchal notions in the best interest of liberating women from marginalisation, abuse, enslavement and ill-treatment. Therefore, writers of books should artistically craft literature that champions women's struggle for freedom and happiness.

Makama (2013) observes that there are significant gender gaps in Nigeria's education, political and economic sectors and that womanhood is denigrated. This study concurs with Makama's observation that women are reduced to second class citizens in many spheres of social life. Whereas Nigeria introduced the National Gender Policy as one of the commitments to eliminate discriminatory practices that are harmful to women, this study discusses such measures with reference to the Zimbabwean standpoint. Thus, it is fundamental to note that governments do not just fold their hands and watch in the face of pervasive discriminatory practices.

Other scholars who raised crucial points on gender inequalities are Canagarajah, Newman and Bhattamishra (2001) who focused on gender inequalities in rural Ghana and Uganda. They concluded that gender inequalities are a product of environmental factors. This point of view resonates with this study's argument that, conscientising authors who form part of the environment on the need to write gender balanced literature is crucial if the eradication of gender biases is to be arrived at. It is against this background that, this study seeks not only to uncover gender biases in new world Shona novels, but also to explore the manner in

which authors present the subject in order to eradicate the marginalisation of women in many spheres of social life.

Although the 1995 Malawi constitution guarantees equal rights to men and women, Luwizghie (2009) observes that in reality, gender disparities still exist in spheres such as law, education, agriculture, health, employment, credit accessibility and political participation. This reflects that gender bias is widespread, not only in Zimbabwe alone but also in other countries. It is therefore, essential that a concerted effort by all countries is made to curb it. One of the steps that can be taken to get rid of negative societal and cultural attitudes that marginalise women is to encourage authors to write gender sensitive books. By so doing, writers can help to project a positive image of both sexes. The step outlined above is in tandem with this study's main focus of exploring the way in which gender is manifested through character portrayal in Shona novels. It is this study's conviction that, people who might have opportunities to read gender neutral books may also be influenced to be gender neutral. Thus, if authors write gender sensitive books, society is likely to be gender sensitive as a result of such literature's influence.

Another scholar who studied the manifestations of gender biases is Mosley (2004) who found out that, in Ethiopia, cooking, cleaning and fetching water are considered feminine domains while agricultural activities (mainly ploughing) are considered masculine roles. While Mosley should be lauded for exposing gender role expectations in the Ethiopian society, his work does not adequately address the issue of gender bias because it does not offer solutions to gender inequalities which are embedded in that society. This study therefore, seeks not only to suggest solutions to gender biases but also to explore in detail the historical roots of gender bias among the Shona people. It also endeavours to cast the net wider by examining several issues which have the propensity to stock up tensions to the detriment of social cohesion.

Christie (2008) acknowledges that there is change in South Africa as women's rights are increasingly being upheld and recognised. While Christie discusses intervention measures

being implemented to steer South Africa towards gender equality, this study fills in the gap by outlining a number of steps being taken to eradicate gender inequalities within the Zimbabwean context. Such measures are undertaken to ensure that men and women compete at the same level to expedite the country's socio-economic development.

Zondi (2013) examines gender discrimination in Zulu and Shona societies through an analysis of *UvaloLwezinhlozi* and *Nervous Conditions*. She, like Muwati (2006) who focused on HIV+ and AIDS and Wasosa (2010) who studied prostitution did not discuss the subject of gender bias adequately from pre- to post-independence Zimbabwe. They all fall short of covering an array of issues and enough ground regarding gender bias. Thus, their discussions tend to be superficial as they lack both depth and breadth on gender bias.

#### **2.1.2.1 Gender and culture**

Zondi (2013) discusses cultural factors on gender discrimination through a case study of *Uvalo Lwezinhlozi and Nervous Conditions*. Her thorough analysis of cultural factors has clarified the researcher's vision on the direction to take in his research. Cultural factors cannot be sidelined when dealing with gender issues because cultural practices have for a long period of time been regarded as major contributors to gender inequality globally. It is however, important to point out that in this study, cultural factors will be examined with close reference to the Zimbabwean context.

### **2.1.3 The Zimbabwean perspective**

According to Zindi (1996), colonisation in Zimbabwe and apartheid in South Africa are to blame for denying people equal educational opportunities. Although he is applauded for emphasising that students cannot reach their full potential and development when denied equal educational opportunities, he does not adequately articulate how the entrenchment of gender inequalities can be eradicated. This study therefore, explores in detail attempts being made by the Zimbabwean government to alter gender inequalities.

Mutekwe and Modiba's (2013) research paper has greatly influenced the trajectory and focus of this research. Together with Mutekwe and Zikhali's (2012) full length research paper, an impetus and rich vocabulary has been added to this study. These scholars are addressing the same subject of the plight of the girl child in a patriarchal environment but from a sociological perspective. However, they fall short on comprehensively discussing how the marginalisation of the girl child can be addressed. While these scholars infuse Eurocentric and Afrocentric paradigms in their discussions, this study focuses its scope in dealing with issues peculiar to the Zimbabwean cause and will try to concentrate more on aspects related to the Zimbabwean context.

Gaidzanwa (1985) examined the portrayal of women in many spheres of life using a sociological paradigm. She argues that authors should turn the tables and portray females in a positive way as they do with males. While her perspective is plausible given women's history of marginalisation, her views tend to be too radical and influenced through extreme exasperation. According to Goodman and Ritzer (2004), radical feminism is radical in that, it is in favour of the replacement of patriarchy with matriarchy. So, in this study, the route to take is not the Western one as it appears to be confrontational. Although it should be acknowledged that gender bias needs redressing, Gaidzanwa's route appears extreme, Eurocentric and apologetic in that she views western values as a yardstick for African

development. Therefore, this study advocates Afrocentric, home grown solutions as the cornerstones for solving African problems taking into consideration the dynamism of culture.

Mutekwe, Modiba and Maphosa (2011) examine the theme of gender bias by examining factors affecting female students' career choices and aspirations in Zimbabwe. They point out that the school curriculum and teachers are the main culprits in propagating patriarchal ideologies while socialisation compounds the school culture's influence. These findings are consistent with those of Mutekwe and Modiba (2015) who found that teachers engage in gender typing of subjects resulting in subjects like mathematics and pure sciences falling in the masculine category while the feminine category includes subjects like home economics, humanities and typing. This implies that what students learn at school depends on ideologies about gender that are embedded in the curriculum in both explicit and hidden forms. Thus, the gendered school curriculum results in fewer women than men pursuing mathematics and science related careers.

Although these scholars did not widen their discussions on conditions for alleviating the effects of gender inequality, their study has provided insights and literature to the present study. It is indeed a fact that there is need for gender-sensitive discourses as they recommended. This study therefore, calls for gender-sensitive authors who write books with the positive agenda of dismantling the already entrenched social roles and substitute them with the progressive view that men and women are equal and should be treated as such in society. This way can ensure that a gender neutral society and learning environment is realised.

According to Gudhlanga and Chirimuuta (2012), it is important to examine the existing curricula in terms of how far they incorporate gender issues in pedagogy. Their point of view is that men and women should be accorded the same opportunities in both the economic and social realm and that authors should project a positive image of both sexes if gender disparities are to be eradicated. Their emphasis on the need for writers of books to get rid of



male superiority perspective over women provides this study with a solid base to advance its arguments.

Mashiri (2013:95) posits that “the prevalence of ideologies justifying female subordination promotes the problem of gender based violence.” He notes that male tacit supremacy that has historical extractions is responsible for the creation of negative female images. This study’s main thrust is consistent with his argument that gender based violence is a symptom of underlying gender inequalities and power imbalances which affect every community in the corner of the globe and Zimbabwe in particular. In other words, gender based violence is a result of gender bias that pervades almost every corner of the global village.

Mazuruse (2010:51) acknowledges that,

Mutasa, in *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* and Nyawaranda, in *Barika Remashefu* have tried to establish that women should not be disadvantaged on the basis of their sexuality since the domestication and subservience of women in Zimbabwean society was not imposed by biological or other natural necessity prescribed by God or tradition.

Whilst his point of view has merit, Mazuruse did not make varied and sufficient in-text references to buttress his point of view. Furthermore, he did not widen the scope to include more novelists. This is caused by the scope of his study which focuses on protest literature.

Muwati (2006) tackles the theme of gender bias by presenting an exposition and critique of Mabasa’s *Mapenzi* (1999) and Mukwazhi’s *Zvibaye Woga* (1996). The selected novelistic voices’ subject matter deals with HIV and AIDS. Wasosa (2010) analysed the portrayal of women in Chakaipa’s *Garandichauya* (1964), Tsodzo’s *Pafunge* (1972), Mabasa’s *Mapenzi* (1999) and Nyandoro’s *Ndozviudza Aniko?* (2006) with regards to prostitution. Although Muwati (2006) advises writers to avoid pontificating on national issues that embrace women, he, like Wasosa (2010) did not consider exploring in detail the manner in which

authors present the theme of gender bias in the best interest of social cohesion and national development.

The subject of gender bias cannot be objectively discussed if authors blame individual characters and turn a blind eye to the system that leads them to err. Mhene (1996) depicts Lorna in *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutura?* (Mungoshi, 1983) and Muchaneta in *Garandichauya* (Chakaipa, 1964), as of loose morals. He denounces them as social deviants. While he is applauded for identifying the social evils in the characters, this study differs from Mhene's point of view in that it does not castigate individual characters but focuses on the system in which the individual is a part.

#### **2.1.3.1 Gender and literature (all books available for people's consumption including school textbooks)**

According to Nhundu (2007), in addition to sexist language in official textbooks, gender manifestation during classroom discourse has a direct effect on students. He argues that the use of gender specific pronouns such as 'he' to represent 'mankind' and 'manpower' to represent 'people resources' have the propensity to destroy the self-esteem of the girl child, thereby rendering her inferior, whilst creating a superiority complex in the boy child. This research's trajectory links with Nhundu's findings in that it seeks to conscientise authors not only of Shona novels but also of other books to write gender sensitive literature in the best interest of correcting the existing injustices.

Zimbabwean history books have multiple gender biases. Stromquist (1997) posits that textbooks present unbalanced accounts of actual accomplishments by men and women. This can be evidenced by Zimbabwean 'O' Level History textbooks which have examples of gender biases. Although the gender biases are facts about historical events, they tend to devalue women thereby posing the risk of creating a gulf between men and women.

Examples of gender bias in Zimbabwean 'O' Level History textbooks would be explored later in this study. This would show that gender bias is not only prevalent in Shona novels but also in other subject areas. It is necessary to scrutinise Zimbabwean History school textbooks in this study because they enhance the researcher's examination of the historical factors on gender bias with close reference to Zimbabwe.

A content analysis of gender issues in College Press and Longman publishers' language textbooks predominantly in Zimbabwean primary schools confirms the notions of gender stereotyping inherent in textbooks. A total of 779 units of work were analysed for gender ratios in professional occupations, domestic chores, leading characters in stories and sexist language (Marira, 1991). The study concludes that, College Press and Longman textbooks reflect stereotyped traditional professional occupations and that, the teaching profession has a better gender balance compared to other professions in this study. This confirms the existence and pervasiveness of gender bias in textbooks and the need to instill a culture of writing gender neutral literature in authors if gender inclusivity is to be realised. Thus, the work of this calibre brings to this study the impetus to unmask gender biases in selected Shona novels.

Nyoni (2004) asserts that the socialisation of gender roles which starts at home produces expectations of men and women. In the same vein, Mutekwe (2007) stresses that children's textbooks reinforce gender role stereotypes acquired from primary socialisation. This implies that gender role stereotypes which are a result of primary socialisation are perpetuated in the educational arena. It is the duty of the teacher to work towards the rectification of such a scenario. From these observations, one may argue that breaking the shackles of unfairness inherent in society and the school curriculum may be an uphill task if literature has gender biases. Thus, this study advocates for the conscientisation of authors to write gender neutral literature. The starting point is to target authors of books. This is because literature is regarded as an important source of information dissemination. Wasosa (2010) affirms that literature stimulates debate and discussion on issues which threaten social cohesion as well as those which promote development. It should be the leading force

in responding to contradictions and challenges. In other words, authors are expected to champion the demolition of male superiority perspectives for the maintenance and sustenance of social cohesion and national development.

After examining and gathering data on gender mainstreaming in the Zimbabwean education sector, Runhare and Gordon (2004) concluded that there are imbalances and inequalities which call for a plan to systematically eliminate such injustices. Their findings dovetail with the aim of this study in that, since literature has immense power in addressing negative perceptions of women and other social injustices, authors play a crucial role in correcting the status quo. In other words, writers of books can halt male supremacy from permeating many aspects of social life by projecting a more positive image of both sexes. The demise of patriarchy ensures the renegotiation of male-female social roles which is vital not only for social harmony, but also for national prosperity.

#### **2.1.3.2 Gender in Zimbabwe's media houses**

Radu and Chekera (2014) posit that there is sexual harassment and gender discrimination within Zimbabwe's newsrooms. They lament the absence of policies and codes of ethics to deal with the situation. Their research paper is laden with statistical data on sexual harassment and gender discrimination. That shows the pervasiveness of gender discrimination in many spheres of social life. However, they did not go beyond the use of quantitative data to give solutions to the women's predicament. This study is therefore, different from theirs in that it suggests how the positive image of the girl and boy child can be portrayed by authors. One of the suggestions is to sensitise authors on the benefits of writing gender balanced books.

### **2.1.3.3 Gender, careers and leadership positions in Zimbabwe**

Chabaya, Rembe, and Wadesango (2009) dwell on factors that impede the advancement of women into leadership positions in primary schools. According to their study, the persistence of gender inequality in Zimbabwe is to blame for the under-representation of women in primary school headship posts. Supported by abundant statistical data, they argue that the influence of gender role stereotypes manifests itself in the form of low self-esteem, lack of confidence and women's beliefs that to them family roles override all other roles. Their study provided clarity to the researcher's vision on the direction to take in his research. Furthermore, it supports this study's core argument that gender bias is considered a barrier to women's advancement in many aspects of social life not only in Zimbabwe but globally.

Runhare (2003:133) observes that "women, the world over are generally disadvantaged in terms of access to, and opportunity in, science and technology related careers." He blames sexual division of labour constructed through socialisation by the family, peer groups, media and education for tracking boys and girls into different fields. Although he raised fundamental issues which are pertinent to his and this research, the focus should be shifted from blaming to suggesting comprehensive solutions in the best interest of promoting gender inclusivity. While he focuses on women perceptions of masculine technical careers in Zimbabwe, this study focuses on gender bias in new world Shona novels.

### **2.1.3.4 The migrant labour system and the peripherisation of African women**

Some authors blame European colonisation for the peripherisation of African women during the colonial era. According to Muwati (2006:3) "... the fact remains that European colonisation is an imperialism of patriarchy." He further elaborated that the villagisation of

African women triggered and exacerbated a gendered social order whose consequences on the psychosocial dynamics on gender were to remain permanent. The implication is that colonial, political and economic policies impacted on gender relations and in the process radically devalued women.

The migrant labour perspective is significant to this research in that it helps the researcher to approach this study from diverse paradigms. This is important in that while the above perspective has been given prominence by some scholars, others, especially Eurocentric scholars have explained the gender phenomenon in the context of misunderstood pre-colonial Africa. The term 'misunderstood' is used because the Shona culture has no gender discrimination but division of labour which ensures a positive social organisation in which all are relevant and effective.

It is not a secret that colonialism had a profound influence on patriarchal structures. According to Mazuruse (2010:51), "The marginalisation of women is caused by patriarchal and imperialist constructs." This implies that gender issues were complicated by the way feminism was propagated by the west and a new social order was ushered. That left the post independent Zimbabwe government with no option but to redress the perceived subjugation of women in society.

#### **2.1.3.5 The Zimbabwe government's efforts to address gender imbalances**

It is a fact that, despite calls for equality worldwide, and despite the Zimbabwe government's efforts together with the role of pressure groups and lobby organisations, women continue to endure marginalisation in many spheres of social life. The government needs people's support to win the battle. Thus, all stakeholders should put heads together if gender marginalisation is to be eradicated. It is therefore, fundamental for this study to uncover gender bias in selected Shona novels and examine the manner in which authors

present the issue. The ultimate aim is to eradicate gender bias in many facets of life in the best interest of speeding up unity, harmony and national development.

#### **2.1.3.6 Implications of literature review**

The literature review has equipped the researcher with an in-depth understanding of gender bias in modern Shona novels. It has not only provided the necessary literature and groundwork which helped to shape the focus of this study, but has also laid a solid foundation on the study of gender bias in selected Shona novels. It is hoped that, this study would give significant new insights on gender bias and how novelists can present the subject in the best interest of national development.

### **2.2 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed studies on gender bias not only in Shona novels but also in related aspects. The reviewed literature is underpinned on the funnel approach which begins with the world perspective followed by the African view and finally the Zimbabwean perspective. It was established that the problem of gender bias is international. The family is accused of constructing gender disparities via the socialisation process rooted from an early age. Thereafter, gender bias infiltrates into the other social institutions like marriage, religion, education, politics and the economy. Even Shona novels are not gender neutral as evidenced by the negative portrayal of characters.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher adopted a dual approach as the literary tool of analysis. The researcher fused feminism with Afrocentricity as lenses for exploring gender bias in selected Shona novels. The chapter is based on the premise that, the theories within which the study is underpinned serve as frames of reference with regards to the examination of gender bias in selected Shona novels. The history of gender bias was examined to establish the historical roots of gender imbalances in Zimbabwe. The link between culture, religion and gender was explored to determine whether culture, especially religion entrench gender bias in society.

#### **3.1 The feminist perspective**

From the feminist perspective, the marginalisation of women in many if not all spheres of life starts from primary socialisation up to classroom discourse (Stromquist, 1997). Giddens (1993:752) defines feminism as the, "Advocacy of the rights of women to equality with men in all spheres of life." It is clear from this definition that, feminism and feminist movements developed in reaction to patriarchal systems of domination. Patriarchy means any set of



social relationships in which men dominate women (Faludi, 1991). One can conclude that feminism is basically about the control and monopolisation of many aspects of life by men.

Although one can argue that, Zimbabwean indigenous cultures do not view women as appendages of men but as equal partners who play complementary roles in marriage and society, foreign influence has undoubtedly altered the rapport between men and women thus creating the idea that some of the practices were unjust as they physically and psychologically impact adversely on women. It is true that, in pre-colonial times, labour was largely divided according to sex and women were acknowledged as of equal value in the family and societal set-up. Feminism cultivated a depiction of men as superior to women to an extent that even Zimbabwean women, who were contented that gender roles of men and women were complementary and interdependent adopted a new perception which advocated for an overhaul of gender roles. Feminism uncovered the unequal power relations which were covert within the Shona culture. This created friction between women and their male counterparts. The perceived gender imbalances have to be redressed.

### **3.1.1 Radical feminism**

Radical feminism rose in the 1960s within the second wave of feminism. This strand of feminism called itself 'radical feminism' because its proponents claimed that it went to the roots of women's oppression, which is patriarchy (Bryson, 1999:27). According to Bryson (1999:27), it was through consciousness that rising groups of women realised a general pattern of male use and abuse of power which gave rise to the slogan 'the personal is political' and inculcated the notion of common sisterhood to fight patriarchy.

Radical feminists allege that everywhere women are violently oppressed by the system of patriarchy (Richardson, 1996 cited in Tong, 1998). Radical feminists contend that,

patriarchy is the most pervasive and most enduring system of inequality and is the basic societal model of inequality (Learner, 1986 cited in Goldsheider and Waite, 1991). Through participation in patriarchy, men learn how to hold other human beings in contempt, to see them as non-human and control them. Within patriarchy, men impose and women learn what subordination looks like. To radical feminists, patriarchy creates guilt and oppression, sadism and masochism, manipulation and deception, all of which drive men and women to other forms of tyranny (Goodman and Ritzer, 2004). According to radical feminists, patriarchy is the least noticed and yet the most significant structure of social inequality.

Central to this idea is the image of patriarchy as violence practised by men and by male dominated organisations against women. Among examples of male dominated organisations are political parties where unfairness is pervasive as women are marginalised. The family is another institution where violence is practised by men against women. According to Goodman and Ritzer (2004), it is this oppression, inequality, subordination, masochism, manipulation, deception and violence against women by men that women are challenging. As a result of all these vices against women, the radical feminists are in favour of the replacement of patriarchy by matriarchy. Millet (1970) quoted in Bryson (1999) argues that in all societies, the relationship between men and women is based on male domination and female subordination which is perpetuated by the process of socialisation that starts from the family and is reinforced by education, literature, religion, the media, etc.

With regards to Shona novels, the way females are portrayed has a bearing on their self-esteem, performance at school and career choices. Thus, socialisation in all facets of life is regarded by radical feminists as a major culprit in adversely affecting social cohesion as well as the well-being of societies. In other words, portraying females negatively has a propensity to create and nurture sour male-female relations which promotes disharmony and hinders national development. Therefore, radical feminists would ask for the reversal of the status quo in terms of the manner in which the girl child is portrayed in Shona novels.

To radical feminists patriarchal notions inculcated during the socialisation process do not only need to be dismantled but also reversed in all spheres of social life including Shona novels and the education system.

### **3.1.2 Marxist-Socialist feminism**

Marxist-Socialist feminism is referred to as a dual systems theory because it insists that neither capitalism nor patriarchy alone can explain gender inequalities (Thompson, 1992). This feminism therefore, understands gender in terms of the way the two systems, the economic system and the system of patriarchy interact with each other. For Marxist-Socialist feminists, social class and capitalism are the principal sources of women's oppression. According to Spender (1985), Marxist-Socialist feminists downplay the influence of patriarchy as the major source of women's exploitation as if social class and capitalism predate it. Just like radical and liberal feminists, Marxist-Socialist feminists question the basis of men's quest to control and manipulate everything in people's day to day social lives. This is so because women are exploited at work and relegated to the home. Thus, patriarchy and capitalism compound the oppression of women.

According to Appelbaum and Chambliss (1995), the inequalities benefit the dominant group more than the subordinate one. This brings us to the conclusion that women are oppressed and exploited to an extent that, their access to education and participation in the public sphere is seriously curtailed. It is quite evident that Marxist-Socialist feminism advocates the education system to work towards undermining both patriarchy and capitalism if women are to attain an equal status with men (Thompson, 1992). Thompson (1992) stresses that this strand of feminism challenges the portrayal of women as passive victims of oppression and visualises them as active agents of their own lives, even when they cannot control the circumstances surrounding them. With regards to Shona novels, the Marxist-Socialist

feminists would encourage the girl child to fight through writing their own gender neutral Shona novels rather than to conform or even collude with their oppressors. Thus, the Marxist-Socialist feminists are in favour of undermining both patriarchy and capitalism in society and the education system if the girl child's emancipation as well as equal participation in many aspects of social life is to be realised.

### **3.1.3 Liberal feminism**

The liberal feminists such as Millet (1970) maintain that society is unfair to females because it limits their access to and retention in certain fields of knowledge. They argue that the education of the girl child or females helps the country to develop particularly on production and healthy factors where knowledge of various forms is needed (Appelbaum and Chambliss, 1995). They also argue that, the education of girls be considered as an investment with probably higher economic returns than that of males. According to Spender (1985) liberal feminists advocate for unrestricted participation of women in all spheres of life. They also advocate for legislative reforms to correct existing imbalances.

From this theory, liberal feminists are calling for respect of women's rights and an end to gender imbalances or inequalities in many aspects of social life. They further question unfairness and marginalisation of women in education and hold the belief that gender biases can be eradicated through a gender neutral education and legislation. Steps which have been taken by the Zimbabwean government since independence to eradicate gender disparities are in response to the demands of liberal feminists.

### **3.1.4 Summary of the feminist theories**

Feminist notions can be summarised as the advocacy of women's emancipation. Feminism aims to highlight the hypothesis of male dominance and patriarchy as a means of power that categorises society into a range of relationships in order to assert control. According to Willis (1984), patriarchy is not only the oldest and most universal form of dominance but the primary one. This implies that, the oppression of women is viewed as the most single form of oppression, and the struggle should be catapulted towards social change either through legal systems or any other forms.

Echols (1989) advocates the elimination of male privileges but equal treatment and access to resources. Echoing the same sentiments, Alcoff (1996) an American philosopher who specialises in feminism, race and existentialism asserts that through patriarchy women have unfairly been referred to as the 'other' gender group in contrast to their male counterparts, and men benefit from the unequal treatment. What these feminist theories agree on is that men's ideas, experiences and observations are regarded as superior while those of women tend to be marginalised in many if not all spheres of life. This implies that patriarchal notions are also overt when it comes to the contents of Shona novels.

### **3.1.5 Liberal feminism's relevance to this study**

Liberal feminism is the most relevant feminist theory to this study because it advocates more about inclusion of women in all spheres of social life. According to Wood (2007:74), liberal feminism argues that men and women are alike in important respects and should enjoy the same economic, political, professional, civic opportunities and rights. It is the liberal feminist theory's argument that, as human beings women have a natural right to the

same opportunities and freedoms as men that makes it outshine others. Thus, it is logical for the general principles of liberty and equality to apply to both men and women in the best interest of eradicating gender imbalances as well as promoting gender parity in people's social lives. With regards to Shona novels, the liberal feminists would advocate for the positive portrayal of both male and female characters if social cohesion is to be achieved. At school, the liberal feminists would advocate for the education system to be fair and desist from limiting learners' access to, and performance in certain subjects.

### **3.2 The Afrocentricity theory**

While feminism is key to the eradication of perceived gender dichotomies, the researcher also adopted Afrocentricity as a literary tool of analysis. This is so because most African people, especially in sub-Saharan regions are grouped linguistically and are culturally and historically homogenous groups that examine themselves first as Africans then more closely as per their particular, peculiar or specific orientations.

Afrocentricity is a theory which asserts that African history and culture should inform any analysis dealing with African issues. Asante (1998) who coined the term Afrocentricity contends that, it is the relocation or repositioning of Africans in a place of agency in which they are no longer spectators but take an active participation in their self-determination. Afrocentricity is a theory designed by African scholars like Ngugi wa Thiongo, Marimba Ani, Chinua Achebe, Magome Ramose, Maulana Karenga, Ali Mazrui and Tsehloane Keto.

According to this theory, Africans are seen as creators, originators and sustainers of ethics, values and customs of Africa, regardless of their geographical entity. The researcher has considered this theory because it helps this study to advance critical arguments aimed at enhancing the African people's chances of survival through a determined effort to relocate them from the periphery to the core.

The central point is to develop African literature which is original and independent of Euro-American influence. A typical example is the narrow marginalisation of Muchaneta in Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964) and Lorna in Mungoshi's *Kunyarara Hakusi Kutaura?* (1983). Lorna is portrayed as loose while Muchaneta is depicted as an evil character that can easily turn to prostitution. What seems not to be considered is that such characters are victims of certain circumstances. In actual fact, Eric takes an unethical decision to fall in love with Lorna who is married to his brother Paul. Under such circumstances, Lorna can be regarded as a victim of male treachery while Muchaneta succumbed to cultural clash. This implies that moral decadence of the two characters can be largely attributed to cultural pluralism and immersion in inextricable dungeons of cultural clash. Novelists seem not to consider the conditions and predicaments of African women as posited by Mguni (2006:42) who emphasises the important role of African culture in liberating women by saying:

The condition of the African woman can only be fully appreciated within the context of African culture and the genuine liberation of the African woman can also only take place in the same context.

This explains why it is necessary at all times to consider the unique experiences and culture of African women so as to address women's problems. Contrary to this notion, some writers' ideological frameworks have Euro-American influence. Therefore, this theory is useful as a tool of analysis in this study because it broadens one's horizon particularly in self-evaluation and criticism.

One of the major tenets of Afrocentricity that makes it relevant to this study is its emphasis on history. It aims to retrieve African dignity, pride and identity which Asante (1998:2) argues were lost as a result of Africa's contact with the west. Proponents of this theory such as Ngugi wa Thiongo, Marimba Ani, Chinua Achebe, Magome Ramose, Maulana Karenga, Ali Mazrui and Tsehloane Keto assert that Africans have lost their cultural centeredness and are now living in borrowed space. Thus, African literature bears the influence of history, culture and the society from which it comes. This implies that the trajectory on which this

study takes has been influenced by the history and social circumstances of the colonial era. Therefore, the African worldview that recognises the co-existence and complementary roles of men and women to ensure the survival of their families and communities was altered by history (Furusa, 2002:47).

This theory has been instrumental in unravelling an emic approach which is the criticism of African issues by insiders of the culture as opposed to an etic approach which allows non-participants to critique issues pertaining to a culture which is alien to them. According to p'Bitek (1986:37) it is only the insiders of a culture who can evaluate how effective it is. This brings us to the conclusion that African women used to show their rootedness in the African culture that was sensitive towards the complementary gender roles of men and women but western influence cultivated a divisive spirit in women against their male counterparts. Thus, African women who were contented that gender roles of men and women were interdependent adopted a new perception which advocated for an overhaul of the status quo. Although society is dynamic, the influence of history on Africa in terms of gender bias cannot be underestimated. Contacts between the west and Africa ushered a new notion that viewed the existing male and female relations as patriarchal and demeaning to the humanity of women. Equal partnership, the complementary and interdependent roles in marriage and society were deconstructed because they were viewed as tilted in favour of men. In a nutshell, the natural differences between men and women which were viewed as beneficial to the whole family and community were interfered with.



### 3.3 The history of gender bias in Zimbabwe

It is imperative to explore the history of gender bias in this study because it influences the manner in which authors of Shona novels present the subject. Scholars such as Runhare (2003:133), Nyoni (2004:40), Mutekwe (2007:13) and Hammond, Chiney and Pearsey (2015) concur that gender bias is a product of the socialisation process which starts at home. This implies that the family plays a pivotal role in constructing gender imbalances. Institutions such as religion, education, politics and the economy simply perpetuate existing gender biases.

In this study, the researcher used a table with 'O' Level History textbooks used in Zimbabwe. The tabulation uncovered gender biases embedded in those textbooks. The researcher was interested in the textbooks because they provide facts about the history of the Shona people. Furthermore, historical facts have to be consumed as they are, whether they are gender biased or not. Therefore, it is necessary for History teachers as curriculum implementers to point out the evils of the past in order to build a better and prosperous society.

According to Hammond, Chiney and Pearsey (2015), socialisation is a process by which people learn characteristics of their group's norms, values, attitudes and behaviours. These scholars aver that primary socialisation that starts at an early age has a lasting impact in people's lives. Thus, authors of Shona novels can be said to have acquired much of what they write about from primary socialisation.

Cawthorns (1999) argues that colonialism changed the African economy, social and gender relationships as well as labour. She notes that for women, the power and prestige they had before colonialism was taken away. In the same vein, Muwati (2006:3) posits that European colonialism partly explains the absolute peripherisation of African women through their villagisation which exacerbated a gendered social order. Their views tally with that of

Wasosa (2010:135) who blame colonialism for an overhaul of African way of life and ushering a new system. These scholars are not denying that gender bias was there before colonialism. To them a new social order replaced the one that was there. Mazuruse (2010:51) argues that although gender bias was there within the Shona culture in the form of division of labour, the influence of imperialism cannot be sidelined. He even calls some of the purported and perceived marginalisation of women in Zimbabwean imperialist constructs.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the family is responsible for inculcating gender role stereotypes. The only difference to take note of between the two periods is that before colonialism, differences in female and male social roles were viewed as division of labour which was there to ensure the existence and survival of the Shona people. In colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwean society, what is perceived as division of labour tends to be regarded as gender bias.

The implication is that the socialisation process in the family that instills patriarchal practices into the young ones does not end within the family. It infiltrates into other social institutions like marriage, religion, education, politics and the economy. These social institutions and agents of socialisation simply perpetuate existing gender biases. Therefore, it is imperative to target families who are both writers and consumers of Shona novels if gender neutrality in society is to be realised. That can be done by writing gender balanced Shona novels.

**Table 1: Gender Bias in Analysed Ordinary Level History Textbooks**

Document	Author and year of publication	Title	Place of publication and publisher	Page	Gender bias	Explanation
1. Textbook.	Prew, M., Pape, J., Mutwira, R., Barnes, T., and Mutwira, E. K. 2001.	<i>People Making History 4.</i>	Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.	47	Picture of a woman weeping after being forced to salute Germany troops.	The logic behind showing a weeping woman can be questioned because nowhere in the book has a man been shown in any negative light.
2. Textbook.	Mlambo, A. S. 1995.	<i>Focus on History 4.</i>	Harare: College Press.	146	Rhodesian soldiers killed hundreds of Zimbabweans including women and children.	The term Zimbabweans represents men. Women are regarded as any other citizens in addition to men.
3. Textbook.	Prew, M., Pape, J. Mutwira, R., Barnes, T. and Mutwira, E. K. 2001.	<i>People making History 4.</i>	Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing	137	Collectivisation in Southern China: Picture shows girls only	Division of labour which is regarded by feminists as

			House.		working in a rice field.	gender bias.
4. Textbook.	Mlambo, A. S. 1995.	<i>Focus on History 4.</i>	Harare: College Press.	32, 196 and 244	The whole book has 76 pictures. Of these, only 5 show women and the remaining show men. Of these 5, three show starving women and children.	Women are under-represented in the book. The three women shown are negatively portrayed.
5. Textbook.	Barnes, T., Mutwira, R., Mvenge, G., Pape, J. and Prew, M. 1993.	<i>People Making History 3.</i>	Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.	12	Women cultivating, gathering, making baskets and fetching wood and water.	Division of labour which is regarded by feminists as gender bias.
6. Textbook.	Barnes, T., Mutwira, R., Mvenge, G., Pape, J. and Prew, M. 1993.	<i>People Making History 3.</i>	Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.	8	Women gathering fruits, cooking and cultivating and men herding cattle, hunting and blacksmithing.	Division of labour which is regarded by feminists as gender bias.
7. Textbook.	Barnes, T., Mutwira, R., Mvenge, G.,	<i>People Making</i>	Harare: Zimbabwe	124	Political power was divided	Women were the last to be

	Pape, J. and Prew, M. 1993.	<i>History 3.</i>	Publishing House.		between chiefs, male elders, young men and finally women.	considered. They were marginalised and regarded as second class citizens.
8. Textbook.	Barnes, T., Mutwira, R., Mvenge, G., Pape, J. and Prew, M. 1993.	<i>People Making History 3.</i>	Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.	124	African women of all ages were legally the same as children. They could not make decisions on their own, own property in their names, their wages belonged to their husbands and they could not open bank accounts in their names.	Women were regarded as children regardless of their ages. Their achievements were not recognised and their rights were trampled upon.
9. Textbook.	Barnes, T., Mutwira, R., Mvenge, G., Pape, J. and Prew, M. 1993.	<i>People Making History 3.</i>	Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.	124	Thousands of women provided services to workers.	Women cannot be regarded as workers. Only men are fit to have that title. Women are

						perceived as less important to be accorded the title.
10. Textbook	Mukanya, S. 1994.	<i>Dynamics of History</i> 2.	Harare: College Press.	186	Young women were handed over as wives to Zulu warriors who had distinguished themselves at the war front.	Women were taken as tokens of appreciation, mere objects.
11. Textbook	Martin, R. M. and Birmingham, D. 1983.	<i>History of Central Africa.</i>	London: Longman.	279	Native Registration Act of 1936 compelled every male African to have registration certificate and other passes but was silent about women.	Women were regarded as less important and not worthy talking about. That is why the Act was silent on them.
12. Textbook.	Martin, R. M. and Birmingham, D. 1983.	<i>History of Central Africa.</i>	London: Longman.	12	Lobola payment was usually in form of cattle.	Although in Shona culture lobola cements relationship between

						families, feminists argue that it reduces women to items which can be bought on the market.
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These are some of the several History textbooks used by 'O' Level History learners in preparation for their final 'O' Level examination. Although History textbooks provide facts about events in life, there is gender bias embedded in those facts. Therefore, History textbooks just like Shona novels and textbooks in other subjects taught in Zimbabwean schools are gender biased. They are intended to teach learners about their heritage but the facts they present end up perpetuating gender biases which have adverse effects on gender relations.

### 3.4 Gender and culture in Zimbabwe

Cultural practices in the Shona society have for a long period of time been accused of perpetuating gender biases. According to Dodo (2013), Zimbabwean women have endured the pain of living under cultural systems which perpetuate gender inequalities. This implies that through beliefs embedded in culture, women are portrayed as inferior to men.

Giddens (2001) views culture as the way of life of the members of society or groups within society which has the following aspects: dress, marriage, customs and family life. From the

above definition, it can be concluded that gender roles, responsibilities, expectations and relationships of men and women are partly products of their culture.

According to Kambarami (2006), cultural teachings foster dependence resulting in most African women heavily depending on their husbands for support. As a result, once a husband dies, the woman quickly remarries to find another pillar of support to lean on. Findings of the Human Rights Monitor (2001) revealed that in Zimbabwe the male child in the family is preferred to the female child because males rule females by right of birth. Even if the male child is not the first born, he is automatically considered the head of the household who should protect and look after the sisters. The girl child is marginalised because eventually she will get married and join another family thereby ensuring the survival of the new family name through bringing additional members into that family. The International Centre for Research on Women (1996) found out that the Shona culture is lenient on male sexual behaviour but very proscriptive when it comes to female sexual behaviour. Males are free to experiment sexually before marriage whilst females have to preserve their virginity for marriage or risk tarnishing the image of the family since the son in law will not pay *mombe yechimanda* (a beast paid when a woman is married as a virgin). This is a cow offered to the in-laws as a token of appreciation for ensuring that his wife preserved her virginity. Although culture is dynamic and times are changing, these findings are consistent with the Shona culture.

Messer (2004:192) posits that in many cultures where *lobola* is a practice, women are expected to satisfy the sexual desires of their husbands. The norm is, when the husband wants sex the wife should comply because that is part of the marriage contract. These are some of the patriarchal and cultural practices which perpetuate gender biases in Zimbabwe. Feminists blame them for suppressing women as well as giving them less value in society.



### **3.5 Gender and religion in Zimbabwe**

As part of culture, religion is another aspect that cannot be ignored when tackling the issue of gender bias. This is so because religious practices are some of the major contributors to gender bias in Zimbabwe. Thabethe (2009) posits that religion contributes to the control and suppression of women as it is a powerful source of male dominance over females. This confirms the impact of religion in entrenching gender bias in Zimbabwe.

According to the Human Rights Monitor (2001), patriarchal attitudes are also found in Christianity and these have strengthened the traditional customs, which men use to control women. An example is given of Eve's alleged creation from Adam's rib. That made women to occupy a subordinate position in church as well as in the family. This makes women to be viewed as merely second class citizens who were created as an afterthought. This implies that if God had seen it fit for Adam to stay alone, then Eve would never have been created and hence women would not exist in this world. Those examples from the bible are used by churches to degrade women thereby entrenching gender bias.

Kambarami (2006) observes that Paul's letter to the Colossians is one example of the letters which Zimbabwean men quote as a justification of their control over women. Colossians 3:18-19 says the woman is expected to "submit to her husband" whilst the husband has to love his wife. Since love is much more difficult to measure than obedience or submissiveness, this verse is used by men to control their women and justify their actions basing on Christianity.

Thabethe (2009) stresses that, the practice of forbidding women from preaching before men, standing in front of men or holding major posts in church is rather denigrating. She notes that the system is evident within the Roman Catholic Church which strictly forbids women from holding posts such as bishops, arch-bishops and also the priest's office. This arrangement ignores the likelihood that women may be the majority in some of the churches.

These are some of several examples of gender biases perpetuated by religions. The negative portrayal of women in society is dehumanising and should be done away with if socio-economic development is to be maintained and sustained.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The feminist perspective and Afrocentricity were adopted as lenses for exploring gender bias in selected Shona novels. The liberal feminism was the most relevant feminist theory to this study because its emphasis on unrestricted participation of women in all spheres of social life enabled it to outshine others. The Afrocentricity theory argued that the perceived discrimination of African women is a myth from the Eurocentric perspective. This is so because African culture from an Afrocentricity perspective had great social and economic benefits. Therefore, it ensured the survival and well-being of the African people. Thus, division of labour must be viewed as useful from the African context. It was noted that gender bias has its roots in the family as constituted after colonialism. Other institutions such as religion and education simply reinforce existing gender biases. Religion, as a part of culture has also been found to perpetuate gender imbalances.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This section is an overview of the research design and methodology used in the study. The discussion mainly focuses on the population sampling, data collection and data analysis. The last part of the section dwells on measures taken to provide trustworthiness in qualitative research.

#### **4.1 Research design**

According to Franckfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996:99), the research design is the blueprint that enables the investigator to come up with solutions to the problems and guides him or her in the various stages of the research. Kumar (2005:84) views a research design as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions and problems. In the same vein, Kothari (2004:31) defines a research design as the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. From the above definitions, a research design simply refers to the plan for a study undertaken by the researcher. Thus, in this study a research design is a reference point that indicates how a research is carried out. This research is entirely qualitative. It enabled the researcher to adopt a person-

centred and holistic perspective as he immersed himself into the participants' views with regards to the manner in which novelists present the subject of gender bias. Another significant aspect of the qualitative research design is that, it enabled the researcher to explore and interpret issues that were not quantifiable such as attitudes, beliefs, anxiety and non-verbal responses such as gestures.

## **4.2 Research methodology**

Kothari (2004:8) defines research methodology as a way to systematically solve the research problem using research instruments. In the same vein, Burns and Grove (2003:488) aver that methodology includes the design, setting, sample, methodological limitations and the data collection and analysis techniques in a study. Their definitions are consistent with that of Henning (2004:36) who describes methodology as a coherent group of methods that complement one another and that have the ability to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research questions and suit the researcher's purpose. In this study, methodology refers to ways of collecting, organising and interpreting data.

The researcher analysed Shona novels which were chosen as primary sources, interviewed authors of this study's primary sources, Shona literature lecturers and accomplished scholars who have also authored their own Shona novels. Questionnaires were administered to Shona literature students from selected institutions of higher learning. Text analysis, interviews and questionnaire administration were undertaken to uncover gender bias portrayed in selected Shona novels and the manner in which authors present the subject. Thus, the qualitative research methodology that is underpinned by experiences, observation, interpretation and subjectivity was employed to collect data in this study.

### **4.3 Sources of information**

This section describes the population and sample as sources from which the data required for this study was gathered.

#### **4.3.1 Population**

Population as viewed by Kothari (2004:153) is the total of items about which information is desired. Similarly, MacDonald and Headlam (2009:12) posit that the word population is used to describe the target group. From the above definitions, population includes all elements that meet certain criteria for inclusion in a study. For the purpose of this study, the group which is of interest to the researcher is Shona literature students and lecturers from institutions of higher learning, authors of novels which were chosen as primary sources and accomplished scholars who have also written their own Shona novels. This target population from which a sample was drawn adequately covers the scope of the study.

#### **4.3.2 Sample**

Sampling according to Kothari (2004:152) refers to the process of obtaining information about an entire population by examining only a part of it. This definition dovetails with that of MacDonald and Headlam (2009:12) who view a sample as the section of the population that will be engaged in the study. Therefore, sampling can be defined as the process of identifying a subset of a population to be included in the study. In this study, sampling was carried out from the target population identified above.

### **4.3.3 Sampling design**

There are several methods of selecting a sample for a study. Each sampling method is done on the basis of the sample design that it falls under. Non-probability sampling design that is rooted in the qualitative research approach is defined by Kothari (2009:59) as the sampling method which does not afford any basis for estimating the probability that each item in the population has in being included in the sample. This type of sampling which is also known as deliberate, purposive, judgement, convenience or quota sampling is based on the researcher's prior knowledge of the population (Kothari, 2009:59). Thus, items for the sample are selected deliberately by the researcher and his or her choice concerning the items remains supreme. The second sample design which is the probability sample is applicable to the quantitative research method. Kothari (2009:60) also refers to it as random or chance sampling. With regards to this sample design, MacDonald and Headlam (2009:68) posit that, it is a sample of a population where each member of the population has an equal chance of being in the sample. Thus, the two sample designs can be viewed as haphazard and systematic sampling respectively. In this study, the researcher employed the non-probability sampling design to come up with a sample for the study.

#### **4.3.3.1 Non-probability sampling design**

In this study, the researcher used the non-probability purposive sampling method to come up with a sample for interview purposes and questionnaire administration. As has been alluded to earlier on, the researcher's sampling was based on his prior knowledge of the population and his choice of the items was deliberate and supreme. Five teachers' colleges and three universities in Zimbabwe were involved in this study. The sample also comprised of thirty-two Shona literature students and eight Shona literature lecturers derived from the

above mentioned institutions of higher learning. Twenty students and five lecturers were from teachers' colleges while twelve students and three lecturers were from universities. Three out of four authors of this study's selected Shona novels as well as five accomplished scholars who have also written their own Shona novels were included in this study. One author of this study's Shona novels which were chosen as primary sources could not be included in the sample since he is deceased. Institutions, lecturers and accomplished scholars were chosen on the basis of the researcher's familiarity with them. In selecting four students per institution, the researcher liaised with their lecturers and came up with participants who were willing, articulate and availed themselves on the agreed questionnaire administration day. The main advantage of consulting lecturers for student participants was to tap the rapport that already existed between them and their students. Therefore, the researcher came up with a genuine and honest sample that guaranteed credible data. In tandem with the researcher's idea of engaging lecturers to involve willing respondents for the study, Shenton (2004:66) avers that each person who is approached should be given opportunities to refuse to participate in the project so as to ensure that the data collection session involves only those who are genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely. Thus, the rapport between lecturers and their students enabled the researcher to select student participants who were willing, genuine, frank and articulate thereby minimising not only the ambiguity of student responses but also enhancing the credibility of data collected. Furthermore, involving lecturers in the selection of student respondents for this study helped to reduce the inclusion of uncooperative participants who have the propensity to render the study's data incredible. The above selected sample is in line with Polit and Hungler's (2004:290) emphasis that the sample for any study must be chosen from the target or accessible population. The specific number that constituted a sample was deemed adequate to cover the scope of the research.

Participants provided data and expressed their viewpoints and experiences with regards to gender bias in selected Shona novels. After shedding light on issues under scrutiny,

triangulation of interviews, questionnaires and text analysis was done to find out if there was corroboration within the different data sources.

#### **4.3.4 Data collection techniques**

This section discusses instruments used to collect data for the study. According to Burns and Grove (2003:373), data gathering is the precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research sub-problems, using methods such as interviews, participant observation, narratives and case histories. From the above definition, data gathering instruments are methods used to solicit data from respondents in a study. The instruments that were used for this study are text analysis, interviews and questionnaire.

##### **4.3.4.1 Text analysis**

Kothari (2004:110) points out that, documents for text analysis can be material such as books, magazines, newspapers or any other confidential and non-confidential information. This point of view resonates with that of MacDonald and Headlam (2009:51) who assert that studying documents can generate a lot of material which the investigator can synthesise. Thus, text analysis is part of this research's strategy to solicit information for analysis.

The researcher used primary sources based on selected Shona novels with the theme to do with gender bias. The novels were chosen because of the researcher's familiarity with them. The selected novels are: Mutasa's *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* (2005), Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964), Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) and Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996). A



textual analysis of the content of these Shona novels was made to unveil the gender bias portrayed in them. These texts provided examples which were used to illustrate the ideas raised by this research and also substantiating the researcher's findings. Where possible, cross references were used with other artists since this was fundamental in establishing the recurring trend of gender bias. Secondary sources especially from history textbooks were referred to as they portrayed how pre-colonial and colonial gender relations were like. Secondary sources were useful as they validated arguments made and at the same time complemented primary sources. It is important in this research to point out that only valid and secondary sources with information relevant to the research topic were considered for reference purposes. Various subjects and scholars were also used in different chapters to show a broader picture of gender bias in many spheres of social life.

Theses, critical works, media reports, pamphlets by non-governmental organisations, journals, magazines, newspapers, conference papers, published and unpublished articles and dissertations were used extensively to illuminate some of the ideas on gender bias in selected Shona novels. This provided the study with a strong base of arguments as well as exploring how authors treat the aspect of male dominance over women. Pictures, descriptive and analytical information from other sources were helpful in uncovering gender biases in this study. This helped the research to be realistic in outlook and not relying on assumptions and personal idiosyncrasies. Reference to theorists and scholars on African literature and their notions on gender bias in African novels provided a strong framework for the study.

Data gathered through text analysis was complemented, expanded and corroborated with data collected through interviews and questionnaires. The comparison and cross references were significant in establishing the recurring trend of gender bias in selected Shona novels.

#### **4.3.4.2 Interviews**

According to MacDonald and Headlam (2009:40-42), interviewing refers to structured or unstructured verbal communication between the researcher and the participants, in which information is presented to the researcher. Their definition dovetails with that of Kothari (2004:97) who views the interview as a method of collecting data involving presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses. This implies that the main purpose of the interaction that takes place between the researcher and the participants during the interview process is to collect data in a manner that is holistic, emic, contextualised, interpretive and immersed. Gathered data was reduced and organised to produce findings that required interpretation by the researcher.

There are three types of interviews which are: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews follow a set of specific questions, which are worked through systematically. This type of interview is used when the researcher wishes to acquire information where the responses are directly comparable (MacDonald and Headlam, 2009:40). According to MacDonald and Headlam (2009:40), the semi-structured interview technique follows a framework in order to address key themes in addition to specific questions. They go on to stress that using this technique allows a certain degree of flexibility for the researcher to respond to answers of the interviewees and therefore, develop the questions or themes as well as other issues as they arise. The unstructured interview method does not follow any predetermined pattern of questions or themes; rather, the interviewer will address the issues as they emerge in the interview (MacDonald and Headlam, 2009:40).

#### **4.3.4.2.1 The type of interview used in this study**

In this study, the researcher used the semi-structured interview that falls between the structured and the unstructured interviews. Its anchorage on the structured and unstructured interviews as well as some measure of flexibility that it gives the researcher to respond to answers of the interviewees are aspects which make it outshine others. Owing to this advantage, the researcher used it in this study. It gave the researcher and respondents room to unveil gender bias in selected Shona novels and the manner in which authors treat the issue.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the target group. The researcher formally interviewed eight lecturers, five from teachers' colleges and three from universities. Three out of four authors of this study's selected Shona novels and five accomplished authors who have written their own Shona novels were formally interviewed. The total number of all interviewees was sixteen. The researcher was satisfied with the number of interviewees which he felt was adequate to provide data for comparison with other data collection instruments. The selection of this group for the interview technique was done to tap its expertise in the field of Shona literature. The researcher's aim was to entirely employ the face-to-face interviews. However, where face-to-face interviews were not possible, telephonic interviews were resorted to. Using face-to-face interviews according to Gwimbi (2003) enables one to observe non-verbal responses and interpret them usefully. In the same vein, Makore-Rukuni (2001) stresses that, using an interview gives one an opportunity to probe, prod and cajole to solicit more information. Thus, interviews necessitated the exploration of people's views with regards to gender bias in selected Shona novels and the manner in which novelists treat the subject.

Overall, using telephonic and the face-to-face interview method of gathering data helped to improve the interpersonal dynamics between the researcher and the research participants and by so doing respondents were generous with their time and expertise. It also

established trust and rapport that yielded insights through not only rephrasing questions but also switching between English and Shona languages for clarifications. The face-to-face interview method was more effective than the telephonic one in that, it enabled the researcher to solicit more information by observing and interpreting non-verbal responses. That was made possible by the fact that, interview questions were open ended which sought to discover, explore and describe participants' views and experiences (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2006:482). As a consequence, some open ended questions were evolving and non-directional. As a result, they gave the researcher room for deeper probing, decoding, interpretation and explanation of issues raised.

In short, the use of interviews was made in search of authors' and other participants' views that are crucial in understanding the issues and concerns of writers in respondents' own words. Participants' responses were helpful not only in examining gender bias in selected Shona novels but also for easy and informed cross-referencing which is vital in this study.

#### **4.3.4.3 Questionnaire**

Mhlanga and Ncube (2003:59) view a questionnaire as "... a document consisting of question items that solicit information from a subject, which is suitable for research analysis." A similar definition is given by Kothari (2004:100) who posits that a questionnaire is a document containing questions that is sent, either by post or directly to people concerned with a request to answer the questions and return the questionnaire. From the above definitions, a questionnaire can be regarded as a document containing questions designed to solicit information from participants for analysis.

In this study, the researcher administered thirty-two questionnaires to thirty-two students from institutions of higher learning. Twenty students were from five teachers' colleges while

twelve students were from three universities. The number was deemed sufficient to gather required data for corroboration with text analysis and interviews. The selection of students for questionnaire administration was done to enable the researcher to combine the three data collection instruments to enhance complementarities, expansion and corroboration of findings.

The researcher utilised open ended questions to gather qualitative data. Spaces were provided for the respondents to support their answers. Open ended questions provided for the expression of respondents' views and understanding of gender bias in selected Shona novels. In a nutshell, open ended questions and the provision of spaces enabled participants to express their views and feelings with regards to the manner in which authors treat the subject of gender bias without being frustrated by the constraints often imposed by using fixed choice responses only.

The researcher's aim was to personally deliver and collect all questionnaires from the respondents. Self administration of questionnaires has an advantage in that it ensures a 100% questionnaire return yield. It also gives the researcher an opportunity to establish rapport with the respondents and to explain clearly the purpose of the study. In this study, the researcher personally administered thirty questionnaires and collected them from respondents. The researcher had a chance to explain clearly the meaning of items on the questionnaires that were unclear to the respondents. Explaining and clarifying technical terms to the respondents ensured the validity, reliability and utility of the questionnaire items. However, there were two participants who were not reached easily. Questionnaires were sent to them, completed and returned.

The questionnaire survey was used in this study because of its ability to collect data from a considerable number of respondents over a relatively short period of time (Mhlanga and Ncube, 2003). In this study, the researcher administered them at the same time and collected them as soon as they were completed. The researcher also used questionnaires to guarantee the confidentiality of research respondents. In line with the principle of

confidentiality, Kothari (2004) asserts that, questionnaires ensure more confidentiality, privacy and anonymity during questionnaire completion. As has been alluded to earlier on, the possibility of obtaining valid and reliable data was enhanced due to confidentiality, privacy, anonymity as well as the absence of face to face conversation. That was necessitated by the absolute freedom that the questionnaire rendered to the respondents.

#### **4.3.5 Data analysis**

According to Burns and Grove (2003:479), data analysis is a mechanism for reducing and organising data to produce findings that require interpretation by the researcher. De Vos (2002:339) views data analysis as a challenging and creative process characterised by an intimate relationship of the researcher with the participants and the data generated. From the above definitions, analysis of data can be viewed as a way in which the researcher reduces and organises collected data to produce findings that require his or her interpretation.

In this study, the analysis of data from interviews started as soon as the researcher collected the first data. That was done in the form of seeking clarifications, elaborations and interpreting non-verbal responses. The researcher was armed with a voice recorder as well as a booklet to jot down notes. However, the actual data analysis involving the three data gathering instruments occurred when the researcher sat down in a quiet and safe environment and decoded the interviewees' responses from his voice recorder as well as from questionnaires into meaningful descriptions. Text analysis which was commenced during the proposal stage was concluded concurrently with the other two data gathering instruments.

Since participants' interview responses were coded to tally with written notes. The researcher listened to each participant's views followed by reading and re-reading the verbatim information (Henning, 2004:127-128). This allowed the researcher to be immersed again in the data so that the final description can be comprehensive and exhaustive. With time, saturation of data was slowly achieved. When each category or research question reached a saturation point, the researcher then took only new data and experiences as they emerged. According to Burns and Grove (2003:382) analysis goes beyond description because data require interpretation. Thus, the researcher identified essential descriptions and features of issues raised to produce findings that required interpretation. The researcher then transformed and extended the interpretation of issues raised into tentative propositions that can be accepted as trustworthy in qualitative research.

To sum up, the researcher presented and analysed data obtained from text analysis, interviews and questionnaires in descriptive form. Although some of the participants' interview words and questionnaire statements were taken verbatim, there were in-depth analyses of issues raised. There were also in-depth analyses of authors' vision and version of females in their literary works of art.

#### **4.4 Measures of quality control**

In this study, the researcher took steps to ensure that quality work was produced in tandem with expected standards of any study. The researcher employed trustworthiness of the qualitative research as measures of quality control.

#### **4.4.1 Trustworthiness of the qualitative research**

Rolfe (2006:304) describes trustworthiness as frameworks and guidelines for judging the value of qualitative research. Similarly, Shenton (2004:63) views trustworthiness of qualitative research as frameworks for ensuring rigour. Their definitions are consistent with that of Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter (2003:29) who clarify the meaning of the term rigour by pointing out that, the goal of rigour in qualitative research is to accurately represent the study participants' experiences. Thus, these scholars concur that, qualitative research is trustworthy if it accurately represents the experiences of the study participants. Lietz and Zayas (2010) provide a succinct summary of trustworthiness in qualitative research by pointing out that, a study is trustworthy if steps are taken in the research procedures to ensure that views or perspectives of participants are authentically gathered and accurately represented in the findings. In this study, the researcher addressed the four parallel criteria that work together to achieve trustworthiness namely: credibility, transferability, dependability which is also known as auditability and confirmability.

##### **4.4.1.1 Credibility**

Credibility, according to Shenton (2004:63), refers to the investigator's attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented. Lincoln and Guba (2000) cited in Morrow (2005:252) assert that credibility refers to the idea of internal consistency, where the core issue involves ensuring rigour in the research process and accurate communication of research findings. This implies that the research's findings must represent the meanings of the research participants. In other words, the study's findings must be authentic and accurate to the descriptions of the research participants. In this study, the researcher ensured that he interpreted the descriptions of his



research participants as accurately as possible. The researcher achieved that by managing the risk of research reactivity as well as bias. Shenton (2004:64-69) and Morrow (2005:252-253) suggest the following activities, engagements and strategies which the researcher used to manage threats of research reactivity and bias as well as increase the credibility of this study's findings. These are: member checking, thick description, prolonged engagements as well as peer and participants debriefing.

#### **4.4.1.1.1 Member checking**

Shenton (2004:68) posits that, checks relating to the accuracy of data may take place on the spot, in the course, and at the end of the data collection dialogues. In the same vein, Polit and Hungler (2004:433) emphasise that, if researchers are to be able to purport that their reconstructions are recognisable to audience members as adequate representations of their own realities, it is essential that they be given the opportunity to react to them. This implies that participants may be asked to read the information they supplied to consider if their words match with what they actually intended. The verification of data analysis can be done with selected research participants or returning to a sample of participants with a draft of the findings to ascertain their sense of agreement with the findings.

In this study, the researcher selected a few research participants and asked for their feedback. The members or participants checked the findings that emerged from the data after the themes were finalised. Thus, the researcher discussed the interpretation and conclusions with them.

#### **4.4.1.1.2 Thick description**

According to Morrow (2005:252), thick descriptions involve detailed, rich descriptions not only of participants' experiences of phenomena but also the contexts in which those experiences occur. Shenton (2004:69) avers that thick description helps to convey the actual situations that have been investigated and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them. Thus, without thick description it is difficult for the reader of the final account to determine the extent to which the overall findings are credible.

In this study, the researcher ensured that he compiled thick, detailed and rich descriptions of the participants' views on gender bias in selected Shona novels and the manner in which authors present the subject. Thickness of the descriptions entails thorough descriptions in line with the participants' views as captured during the interview and questionnaire administration. In addition to text analysis and questionnaire administration, the use of the voice recorder helped the researcher to compile thick descriptions which rendered this study credible since the information was always available even after the actual interview process.

#### **4.4.1.1.3 Prolonged engagements**

Prolonged engagements may be achieved via consultation of appropriate documents and preliminary visits to the organisations to establish a relationship of trust between the researcher and the participants (Shenton, 2004:65). This means that prolonged engagement gave the researcher enough time not only to learn the culture of the participants but also to deal with distortions and build trust with the research participants. It was absolutely imperative that the researcher spent enough time with participants because

that orientation minimised undue attention and overreaction that was likely to be exhibited by participants if they had met a stranger.

According to Holloway (2005:175) enough time must be spent with the participants to develop a trusting relationship with them during the interviews and member checks. This emphasises the importance of prolonged engagement if the research findings are to be credible. Thus, my prolonged engagement with participants at the teachers' colleges and universities involved in this study undoubtedly increased the credibility of this study.

#### **4.4.1.1.4 Peer and participants debriefing**

Morrow (2005:252), suggests the use of peer debriefers or peer researchers to increase the credibility of the qualitative research. In the same vein, Shenton (2004:67) avers that, through frequent debriefing sessions, the vision of the investigator may be widened as others bring to bear their experiences and perceptions. Their views match with those of Polit and Hungler (2004:432) who posit that peer debriefing exposes a researcher to the searching questions of others who are experienced in the methods of enquiry, the phenomenon or both. In this study, the researcher collaborated with research peers and participants in order not only to widen his vision of gender bias in selected Shona novels but also to attend to detected flaws as well as biases in this study. Participants confirmed their perceptions as true after checking the findings. Therefore, this study can be said to be credible.

#### 4.4.1.2 Transferability

According to Morrow (2005:252), transferability refers to the extent to which the reader is able to generalise the findings of a study to her or his own context. Similarly, Shenton (2004:69) views transferability as the extent to which the readers relate the findings of a study to their own positions or situations. Consistent with the above definitions is that of Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter (2003:29) who point out that, transferability which is also known as fittingness determines whether the findings of a study fit in or are transferable to similar situations. Thus, transferability according to the definitions provided above refers to the probability that the study findings have meaning to others in similar situations.

Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter (2003:29) argue that, the potential user, not the researcher, determines whether or not the findings are transferable. In light of this, all scholars who have studied this parallel criterion that can be used to achieve trustworthiness in qualitative research suggest that, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork sites is provided in order to enable the reader to make such a transfer. In other words, comparison and transfer of findings is possible if the researcher provides a dense description of the research context and sufficient descriptive data that the reader can assess and evaluate its applicability or transferability either to his or her own context or another situation.

In this study, the researcher provided thick and dense descriptions of the participants' views with regards to gender bias in selected Shona novels and gave the findings back to selected students, lecturers, authors and accomplished scholars who were involved in the study for member checks. This gave them an opportunity to consider if the findings can be transferable to their own or other situations. Thus, the confirmation by some participants that the findings had the same meaning as theirs was evident. The researcher also exposed his research findings to colleagues and other members who were not part of the participants not only for constructive criticism but also to afford them opportunities to

consider if the findings can be transferable to their own or other situations. Finally, the researcher exposed his research findings to his supervisors so that they can continue with their supervisory role of examining the findings, interpretations, recommendations and attesting that they are supported by data. By so doing, they also evaluated his study's transferability to their own contexts or other situations.

#### **4.4.1.3 Dependability**

The term dependability as a parallel criterion that works to achieve trustworthiness of the qualitative research is defined by Morrow (2005:252) as a process through which derived research findings should be explicit and repeatable as much as possible. A similar view is given by Shenton (2004:71) who stresses that, in order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results. Thus, dependability is met through securing the credibility of the findings. The implication is that, a demonstration of credibility goes some distance in ensuring dependability.

Polit and Hungler (2004:435) emphasise that dependability is the stability of data over time and is obtained with stepwise replication and inquiry audit. In the same vein, Holloway (2005:143) avers that, dependability is related to consistency of findings in that if the study were repeated in a similar context with the same participants, the findings would be consistent. Thus, in qualitative research the instruments to be assessed for consistency are the researcher and the participants. For the findings of the study to be dependable, they should be checked and audited by means of external checks. A more direct technique is the "overlap method" which involves a series of checks.

In this study, the researcher ensured that dependability was achieved by giving his carefully tracked and audited document 'the audit trail' to his participants, supervisors, peer researchers, student advisors as well as colleagues who are in the research field for examination. According to Holloway (2005:143), even a single audit can be used to determine dependability and confirmability simultaneously.

#### **4.4.1.4 Confirmability**

According to Morrow (2005:252), confirmability is based on the perspective that the integrity of findings lies in the data and that the researcher must adequately tie together the data, analytic processes and findings in such a way that the reader is able to confirm the adequacy of the findings. This view is consistent with that of Shenton (2004:72) who asserts that steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. The purpose of confirmability is to illustrate that the evidence and thought processes give another researcher the same conclusions as in the research context (Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter, 2003:38). Thus, for the research to be said to be confirmable, findings should represent as far as is humanly possible, the situation being researched rather than the beliefs, pet theories or biases of the researcher. From the above definitions, it can be deduced that, confirmability is a strategy to ensure neutrality of data and findings and not the researcher's neutrality.

Many of the procedures used to accomplish the goals of dependability, credibility and transferability are also applicable to confirmability (Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter, 2003:38; Shenton, 2004:72; Morrow, 2005:252). To ensure that the researcher accomplished confirmability in this study, he collected raw data using questionnaires and the voice recorder during interviews, analysed and synthesised the data making sure that

the conclusions of the study's findings are supported by the gathered data. The researcher then ensured that he adhered to prolonged engagements, member checking, peer and participants debriefing as well as transferability. Above all, the researcher took the necessary steps to compile thick, detailed and rich descriptions of the participants' perceptions on gender bias in selected Shona novels. In that way, confirmability of this study was accomplished.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This section covered an overview of the research design and methodology used in the study. The qualitative research design was adopted. Authors of this research's selected Shona novels, Shona literature lecturers and accomplished scholars who were interviewed provided valuable information for this study. Through questionnaires, Shona literature students from teachers' colleges and universities in Zimbabwe also supplied relevant information for the study. The combined use of text analysis, interviews and questionnaires enhanced comparison of research findings. This section took measures to ensure trustworthiness of qualitative research was achieved in this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses data gathered from text analysis, interview and questionnaire respondents. Collaborating text analysis with the other two methods of gathering data necessitated the exploration of people's views with regards to gender bias in selected Shona novels and the manner in which novelists treat the subject. The data appears in descriptive form. The last part of the chapter outlines some of the steps which are being taken by the Zimbabwe government to eradicate gender imbalances.

#### 5.1 Gender bias in *Garandichauya*

In Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964) gender bias or the negative portrayal of characters centres around Muchaneta and to a lesser extend her mother who is blamed for tutoring Muchaneta badly. On page 1, Muchaneta is portrayed as a very cruel girl. With the backing of her mother she deliberately burns Matamba with hot tea. The author writes:



*Baba vangu imi! Takashama kudaro maromo anenge edahwa takanzi nesvutugadzike inopisa mukanwa bvoo, mukanwa mukakwakwata, mwana akati ndobararadza.*

(Oh my father! While we were opening our big unshapely lips like a night jar, hot tea was poured into our mouth, the mouth boiled and he cried too much.)

This depicts a bad and insensitive girl who enjoys inflicting pain on others. This bad attitude is perpetuated throughout the novel but it later manifests in the form of engaging in social evils such as extra-marital affairs and prostitution when she is divorced.

After getting married to a man who works in Mutare, Muchaneta remains unfaithful despite the fact that her husband manages to meet most of her needs including monetary ones. She shamelessly asks for money from one teacher, Muchazvirega. On page 9, Muchaneta begs for money:

*Hamungandiyamurewo here nemari, ndiri kuda kunotengera amai tsvigiri.*

(May you please help me with money; I would like to buy sugar for my mother.)

This is not only unexpected but also an assault on her dignity in the society. Such an attitude in society is least expected of married people.

This unbelievable and disgraceful personality can be traced to earlier advice by her mother. On page 4, Muchaneta's mother advises her:

*Unofanira kuziva kuti chava chirungu chino, ukada kuteera tsika dzekare, unofa uri rombe rokupedzisira.*

(You must know that these are now modern times. If you stick to our past cultural norms you will die a pauper.)

Muchaneta did not go against her mother's advice. This is a typical example of bad tutelage by a parent for it is against the Shona culture to nurture children in a bad way. All this is happening against the background of Muchaneta being well supported by her husband materially and financially. Her husband even went on to buy her a bicycle, which was a symbol of well being in those times.

The advice given to Muchaneta by her mother dovetails with the setting of the novel. The novel is set in the early days of colonialism in which capitalism and western enterprises into rural areas were spreading. During this period modernity was in its infancy among the Shona people. It reflects a cultural clash and a tragic reaction as Muchaneta with the total support of her mother ends up resorting to deviant behaviour in an attempt to adjust to the new social order.

Even before marriage, Muchaneta is shown to have had many relationships for material benefits. She confesses:

*Zvandanga ndisati ndawanikwa, ndaiva nevakomana vashanu vaindipa zvose zvandaيدا. Mudzidzisi wepachikoro apa ndakambomudya (6).*

(Before I got married, I had five boyfriends who met my needs. I milked a teacher at the nearby school.)

This confirms the track record of Muchaneta as a woman of loose morals. That can also be attributed to her attempt to adjust to the new lease of life brought about by colonialism. European imperialism brought with it competition for material benefits such as money, tea, bread and bicycles. Thus, Muchaneta is caught up in an inextricable web due to her unlimited desire to access such benefits to please not only herself but also her mother.

Throughout this literary work of art, Muchaneta is portrayed as a character of bad influence. In addition to social vices uncovered so far she successfully persuades Handisumbe to divorce his wife on the pretext that they were going to get married to each other. She also proposes to Matamba and tries to persuade him not to visit his rural home for the funeral of

his grandmother. These are some of the many destructive social evils that she is involved in. On the other hand, her mother's social vices include but are not limited to accepting Handisumbe's *lobola* after the death of Muchaneta's father. To accept *lobola* when her husband's male relatives are still surviving is against the Shona culture.

Another example which confirms that the author takes cognisance of the impact of colonialism and the new way of life it ushered is Muchaneta's regrets when she is talking to Matamba in Gatoma. She regrets:

*Unoziva here kuti kare ndaiva nemurume wangu wandakaramba nekuda kwamai vangu vaida tunonaka. Dai ndakaziva ndisina kuramba murume wangu wekutanga* (64).

(Do you know that I divorced my husband because of my mother's advice? She wanted western life and food. Had I known I should not have divorced my first husband.)

This implies that Muchaneta is aware of the root cause of her irresponsible behaviour. The source is her mother who initiated her into prostitution because of her love for money, tea, bread and other material benefits which were brought by capitalism. Therefore, colonialism is more to blame for her character malformation than any other factor. In other words, whether her unfaithfulness is a result of economic forces or parental advice, the impact of the capitalist economy cannot be underestimated. It is important to point out that it was not Muchaneta only who was affected by the wave of economic forces but also men like Handisumbe who saw this as an opportunity to exploit women sexually yet it is only women who are portrayed negatively.

Interviewee 1 said that there is negative portrayal of women in *Garandichauya* (1964). She said that women are unfairly castigated in situations where men are supposed to be equally blamed for their irresponsible behaviour in society. She gave an excerpt on page 90 to clarify her point of view:

*Vasikana ava waitambawo mutambo uyu waitambwa naMuchaneta; mutambo unouraya vanhurume vazhinji, mutambo waipunza dzimba dzakange dzine rugare, mutambo waparadza nyika...*

(These girls were also involved in the same game like that of Muchaneta, a game that has killed many men, a game that has destroyed families and peace, a game that has destroyed the nation...)

The interviewee is surprised that the writer blames women for disturbing peace and stability in society and somehow exonerates men in a situation where they are equally responsible for the immoral behaviour bedevilling the nation. She pointed out that despite prostitution being a product of consensus between males and females, only females are unfairly depicted as murderers. Men are portrayed as victims of this sexual relationship. She said the author's way of writing tends to influence readers to view women not only as prostitutes but also murderers who are bent on disturbing peace and stability in society. This gives women negative images and creates a gulf between men and women as females are looked down upon. That does not create healthy gender relations.

Questionnaire respondent 1 observed that Chakaipa seems to be on a mission to portray women negatively. He gave an example of Muchaneta who is shown to be overwhelmed by her beauty to an extent that she feels to be in her own class. On page 6, Muchaneta states:

*Iye pano pasi pane munhu angandikunda kunaka here? Kana zvandakaita muchiringiro zviri izvo, hapana ...*

(Is there anyone in the world who can be more beautiful than me? If the image in the mirror is true, then there is no one...)

The questionnaire respondent said that Muchaneta is carefully deployed and thrust to use her physical beauty for prostitution purposes. The message, therefore, is that men are supposed to watch out and guard against beautiful women for they tend to transform their

physical beauty into undesirable acts rather than utility. This dovetails with some gender insensitive Shona proverbs like *mukadzi munaku kukona kuba anoroya* (an extremely beautiful woman can either be a thief or a witch). Since Shona novels are accessible to many people, there is likelihood that women who are perceived as beautiful are labelled prostitutes. Such dysfunctional images and messages have the propensity to cause disharmony in society.

Chakaipa, to some extent tries to strike a balance by portraying a positive image of Muchaneta's father as a no-nonsense man. Handisumbe's wife is also well portrayed in the novel. She is described as:

*Mukadzi...akanga ane ungaru, mukadzi aida kuvaka musha, mudzimai aiziva kubata vana nomurume wake (11).*

(The wife...had wisdom, was interested in the success of her family and was able to take care of her children and husband.)

However, the instances in which they are portrayed positively are not given much descriptive attention in the novel. In fact, they are mentioned in passing.

The author is applauded for castigating individual characters together with the entire system in which the individuals are appendages. However, portraying them negatively throughout the entire literary work of art does not enhance cordial male-female relationship which is a prerequisite if society's developments are to be achieved. The way Chakaipa portrays Muchaneta and her mother seems to be influenced by his vision and version of the females. Foregrounding negative female symbolism has the danger of engendering patriarchy in society which has the propensity to retard national development.

## 5.2 Gender bias in *Zvibaye Woga*

In *Zvibaye Woga*, Mukwazhi seems to advance women as irrational and destructive human beings in society. On page 7, he uses Cephas' brother to articulate his vision and version of women. He says:

*Unoona munin'ina chinhu chinonzi mukadzi chinonetsa kunzwisisa zvekuti ukateerera zvaanotaura nguva zhinji unoparadzana nehama dzako ukasara wave woga...zvino iwe uri murume unofanira kufunga pachirume.*

(You see my young brother, a woman is a very difficult thing to understand and if you take what she says, you will be separated from your relatives...now, you are a man and you must reason like one.)

There is clear evidence of gender bias in the above statement which has the propensity to devalue the respect and dignity of women in society. Such a statement tends to create sour gender relations which threaten social cohesion. This statement shows that males purport to possess the ability to analyse and understand women. They come to a conclusion that women are irrational. It is in this context that, the author tends to be accused of presenting women as docile and devoid of proper reasoning. Thus, literature ceases to be a vehicle of social cohesion as it creates friction between men and women. People in conflict can hardly unite to articulate developmental issues.

In addition to being irrational, women are also viewed as irresponsible and without dignity. Cephas in *Zvibaye woga* (1996:79) who is the author's voice soliloquises:

*Asi chaizvo nyika iri kuenda kupi? Vasikana vemazuva ano vave kunetsa kunzwisisa, kuda ndicho chirungu chakati kuuya ichi. Matyira chaiwo havachina, tsika vakarasa imbwa dzikanonga hadzo, ukangomunyenga haakurambi, mumba mako anopinda pasina kana mubvunzo...umhandara*

*neunhu hwake akatengesa kare kwazvo sakani varume vasisade kuroora mazuvano.*

(Where is the country going as a nation? Today's girls are difficult to understand. Maybe it is due to the influence of western culture. They have lost all sense of fear and cultural dignity because when you propose to them, they do not turn you down. In your lodgings, she just enters without any question...virginity and dignity were sold long back and this is the reason why men no longer want to marry.)

The above excerpt compares men and women. Women are regarded as irrational, irresponsible and disgraceful. On the other hand men are responsible because they are endowed with reason. This insinuation is not only wrong but malicious. It boggles the mind to see men blaming women in situations and relationships in which both parties are involved. Women are visualised as possessing inherent and universal irresponsibility in a situation where men are also stakeholders and should be equally castigated. This unfair treatment of females shows that literature is not gender neutral, and is not written by gender neutral authors. Such writing impacts negatively on gender relations through the absence of female role models. Therefore, existing social imbalances and injustices are entrenched by literature.

In this novel, women are denigrated due to their perceived irresponsible behaviour. On page 107, Cephas is convinced that men who constitute the rational majority are reneging on marriages because women have become totally irresponsible. He says:

*Vasikana vashoma kwazvo vanoita zvekukumbirwa. Vazhinji vava kungoita zvekutizira ivo vave nenhumbu kare vopinda mumudungwe wemvana dzadai kutekeshera nenyika.*

(Very few girls today are properly married. The majority simply elope on discovering that they are pregnant, joining the long line of the deflowered women who have been rejected by men.)

This excerpt denounces women as social deviants. It is evident that social evils are attributed to female characters only. While women are savaged for their purported high levels of moral decadence, their male counterparts are absolved from any wrong doing yet they are responsible for deflowering women. The over-generalisation of women's behaviour has the propensity of reducing them to unreasoning stooges who can easily be used as sex toys.

The wholesale condemnation of women degrades them. Furthermore, the general yet misguided assumption that women's actions are not informed by reason is detrimental to their dignity, self esteem and well being. Consequently, the society's effort to eradicate gender bias is curtailed.

Even the author's understanding of promiscuity is biased against women. This can be observed on page 13. In his description of prostitutes, he writes:

*Pfambi munhu anorarama nekutengesa muviri wake kwete nokuti anoda asi kuti uyu munhu asina kukwana zvakare nokuti anovenga vakadzi vose vanochogetedza varume vavo zvinova zvinomuradza nenzara akashaya anomupa mari...*

(A prostitute is a person who survives by selling her body not out of choice but due to insanity. She hates all women who lead settled lives and who protect their husbands. She gets hurt if she cannot buy food after failing to get ready clients...)

To regard women as sole prostitutes shows bias against them because in Shona culture the term *pfambi* (a promiscuous person, usually perceived as a woman) does not refer to



women alone. The term is gender neutral. In the Shona dictionary edited by Chimhundu (1996:378) the term *pfambi* (prostitute) is defined as:

*Mukadzi anorara nevarume vakawanda kana murume anorara nevarume vakawanda.*

(A woman who sleeps around with many men or a man who sleeps around with many women.)

It is surprising that only women have been depicted and described as *pfambi* (prostitutes) by the author. This implies that while it is undesirable for women to be promiscuous, the author's tendency to shield men and portray women only as prostitutes casts negative psychological and sociological effects on women thereby eroding their dignity. Consequently, people who read Shona novels are likely to be convinced that women are undesirable elements in the society. That has potential to affect gender relations, social cohesion and a nation's development.

Cephas who is the author's voice of reason is carefully deployed to quench his insatiable sexual appetite on easy-to-bed girls such as Miriro, Belinda, Florina, Lucy, Mercy and a host of others who are not mentioned by their names and then exonerates him from any wrong doing. We are made aware of his sexual escapades by Florina who on page 62 says that:

*Ipo pano pane zakwatira rezvisikana zvokuti zvimwe zvana zvechikoro ndakambozvinyorera tsamba. Iko zvino kana mutownship umu hazvisiviki zvichitya. Chimwe chacho chinotengesa muchitoro ndakachipa yambiro.*

(Here, he has a lot of girlfriends and some of them are school children. I once wrote letters to them. Right now, they are afraid of me. Therefore, they seldom come to this township. I have also warned another girl who works at the local store.)

The use of the secondary prefixes (*zvi-*) and (*chi-*) shows bias against women as they carry overtones of criticism, sarcasm and caricature. In addition to denigrating women through the use of prefixes (*zvi-*) and (*chi-*), Cephas is absolved from any wrong doing by the author yet the bedded girls were victims of male treachery. The denigration of women alone is a recipe for the perpetuation of disunity between men and women which are detrimental to a nation's development.

The author goes on to depict that men are victims of cursed female sexuality. This is evidenced by the statement that accuses Belinda of spreading diseases. On page 82, Cephas says:

*Ikozvino uri kungofamba uchingokusha chirwere chako kuvarume vakawanda vasina chavanombofungira.*

(Right now, you are simply spreading your disease to innocent and unsuspecting men.)

The above statement is a clear testimony that female characters like Belinda are regarded as irresponsible and therefore, stand for social evils while males are only defiled by women. We can argue that despite Cephas's several unprotected sexual relationships, he is not accused of spreading any diseases. In fact, Belinda is castigated at the expense of Cephas who has unprotected sex with all of his sexual partners. The author could have been credited for generating functional messages by acknowledging that Cephas was equally capable of transmitting STIs just like Belinda and any other woman. The blame game simply serves to encourage adverse male-female relations which are a recipe for social divisions at the expense of social cohesion and development.

Interviewee 2 said Cephas in *Zvibaye Woga* (1996) seems to be well deployed so that women characters can be portrayed negatively. This can be evidenced on page 124 when Belinda expresses shock on discovering that Cephas is very healthy. She asks:

*Ha-a ndiwe zvako Cephas? Ko, kusimba kudaro uri kudyei zvako mugoni?*

(Oh! It's you Cephas? What is that you are feeding on which makes you so healthy?)

The author's decision to show Cephas as healthy and Belinda and Miriro as having lost a lot of weight due to AIDS can be regarded as a careful construction aimed at portraying women negatively. The interviewee said that despite Cephas's unprotected sexual escapades with several women including Belinda, the author doesn't say anything about him with regards to spreading STIs and contracting AIDS. According to the interviewee, it is possible that Cephas might not have contracted the disease but the contrast between males and females in the novel generates the impression that STIs are mostly spread by women. Even when the novel ends, Cephas is happily married and leads a settled life with Mercy, a young school girl who is one of his erstwhile sexual partners. On the other hand, all women characters who were his former sexual partners are eliminated from the scene through AIDS. This way of writing deprives readers of the much needed female role models and creates a fragmented society where females are depicted as social deviants bent on spreading deadly diseases among other social vices.

Gender biases uncovered in Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996) largely depict negative portrayal of women. Men are exonerated from any wrong doing even in situations where they were equally to blame. This manner of writing perpetuates existing gender imbalances and the marginalisation of women in society.

### **5.3 Gender bias in *Mapenzi***

Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) is a novel with overt gender biases. The gender bias which is evident in his novel is linked to prostitution. When Kundai is travelling from the town of Bindura to the capital city of Harare, she is unnecessarily disparaged by Ticha

Hamundigone, the conductor as well as the driver. Hamundigone blames women for the moral decadence bedevilling the country. On page 31, he says:

*Kubva moshanda zvakanaka nhai zimhandara, asi musatiuraire nyika! Uye udzidzewo kutaura zvakanaka, kwete kutaura nomumhuno kunge une madzihwa. Munotisemesa nechinozi chenyu ichi.*

(Work nicely young lady but don't destroy our country. Also learn to talk nicely. We are bored by the way you talk.)

The conductor weighs in:

*Kana musingazvizivi vana amai uyu musikana ndatomuona kare. Ari kuuya kuno kuHarare kuzouraya vanhu, ipfambi uyu. Vanogarira vanhu muno munaSecond street, kwete ini asi vanoda vane mota, vanobhadhara mari zhinji (31).*

(Mothers, I have already concluded on her. She is coming to Harare to kill people. She is a prostitute. She waits for her clients here in Second Street, not myself but those with cars who pay more.)

The driver also contributes:

*Iii nyika yashata iyi vabereki. Ungati vanhu ivava havaoni kufa kuri kuita vamwe (31).*

(Parents, the situation in the country is no longer good. These people do not seem to see that others are dying.)

The statements above show biases against women with regards to prostitution. It is a known fact that prostitution involves an agreement between men and women yet men are shielded from any wrong doing. This is evidenced by the total mutilation of women alone by

people who are in the minibus. It is amazing that men are not mentioned and accused of contributing to pervasive prostitution in Harare and the country at large.

Women are portrayed in negative images through being labelled prostitutes and murderers. By so doing, readers do not sympathise with them as they are shown to be sources of problems bedevilling the country. The manner in which the author portrays women creates a divided society where people look down upon each other. This makes solidarity in articulating national developmental issues an uphill task. Consequently literature loses its role of building the nation.

On page 31, Hamundigone, the main character who is the author's voice of reason castigates women who he perceives as prostitutes by giving nasty and misleading comments. With reference to Kundai, he says:

*Regai zvipedzane asi varoyi vanhu ivava. Munoti kufamba usiku kudai kuti zvidii?*

(Let them kill each other. These people are witches. Why do they loiter around at night?)

Hamundigone had already concluded that Kundai was a prostitute and labels all prostitutes witches. In fact, there is a general consensus in the minibus that women bring misery, diseases and death among the people through prostitution. Thus, likening prostitutes who in their eyes are women only is tantamount to labelling them enemies to human progress in society. This lack of gender neutrality by the author is a catalyst to gender marginalisation and a barrier to societal prosperity.

Questionnaire respondent 2 singled out an event that culminated in Bunny and Maud falling in love. The respondent said that the author gave more attention to Maud's sexual cunningness that wins Bunny's heart avoiding positive social contributions which women are capable of making. Bunny tells us:

*Kana kuti ndizive kuti chavanondinetsera chii nokundipa miyedzo yakadaro zvinotonetsa kunzwisisa...(41) Vakataura vakasimudza rimwe gumbo voriturikidza pamusoro perimwe. Vakabva vangosara zvavo vayanika zvidya zvese panze. Ndakarohwa nehana. Ndakadikitira. Vaive vandibata-bata kusingapukutiki neruoko. Vaive vanokora mwoyo wangu netsinga dzawo dzose (78).*

(I do not even know why she was giving me such temptations...She talked while purposefully lifting one of her legs and placed it on top of the other. As a result, all her thighs were exposed. My heart beat fast. I sweated. She had just snatched my heart with all its arteries.)

According to the questionnaire respondent, all the blame tends to be heaped on Maud who employs her sexual cunningness to put Bunny in a very difficult situation. Bunny is shielded from any wrong doing. He is portrayed as succumbing to pressure from a skilful temptress whose sexual seductions and tactics won his heart. According to the author's portrayal of Maud, she exhibits a high level of moral decadence because she is determined to win Bunny knowing very well that he has a girlfriend that he intends to marry. This level of callousness can be interpreted as the author's in-built negative visualization and version of women in society. The respondent concluded by reiterating that portraying females negatively throughout the entire literary work of art does not enhance cordial male-female relationship which is a prerequisite if society's developments are to be realised. Women deserve to be depicted as nation builders as opposed to being portrayed as irresponsible people with divisive tendencies. Readers identify themselves with characters, so labelling women without making an attempt to portray them positively creates hostile gender relations.

In situations where prostitution is involved, strong terms are used with reference to women alone. On page 51, Vincent describes the appearance of his uncle Saba's prostitute. He says:

*Nezuro chaiye vakauya kumba kwangu nehure racho, rino zimunhu rinenge gomo kukura nemazizamu anenge emombe dzemukaka.*

(Yesterday, he came to my place with this huge prostitute, a huge person who is like a mountain with huge breasts like those of dairy cows.)

The terms used to describe Saba's prostitute in the statement above shows the author's in-built gender biases against women. The terms tend to have durable and lasting psycho-social effects on people who may have opportunities to read this literary work of art. This is so because terms like *hure* (prostitute) as well as prefixes (*zi-*) and (*ri-*) which carry overtones of criticism, sarcasm and caricature are heaped on one of the female characters blamed for some of the problems affecting society.

Even though prostitution was a result of the depreciating economy during the time this novel was written, the use of bestial terms in the description by the author has a propensity to make readers overlook the plight of prostitutes. The terms employed by the writer are meant to castigate the behaviour (prostitution) of Saba's partner as animalistic, which tend to make readers blame her in her individual capacity. Surprisingly, the terms tend to condemn only the woman's immorality in a situation where the man is equally to blame. Apart from being denied accommodation, Saba is not subjected to any castigation yet he is part of the agreement. Given this scenario, the author cannot be exonerated from subscribing to the stigma attached to prostitutes by saying that they are social misfits. Consequently, this promotes hostile gender relations as the prostitute is given sole blame for the disintegration of Saba's family. Degrading terms tend to enhance sour gender relations and widen gender imbalances.

On page 68, Vincent also savages Joyi and other prostitutes as sources of HIV and AIDS. He gives the following sentiments:

*Magarinya anonetsa. Imbwa dzevanhu idzi. Zvine mukondozi futi.*

(Prostitutes are a nuisance. They are dogs. Above all they have AIDS.)

Vincent is castigating his girlfriend and it is surprising that he is not acknowledging his participation in prostitution. According to him, Joyi and other prostitutes are the only people who can contract and spread AIDS. Men are safe. Mabasa is therefore, subscribing to the blame game which views women only as prostitutes and sources of HIV and AIDS. Such images serve to enhance bitter male-female relationships which negate societal development.

Like in Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996), reference to *pfambi* is also witnessed in Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) where the dehumanising nature of Harare, the capital city, is likened to what the author sees as the destructive potential of women. The terms are strong and have profound effects on gender relations. On page 32, Ticha Hamundigone says:

*Harare zipfambi rakazvipenda-penda zvakadarikidza mwero.*

(Harare resembles a female prostitute that has over-applied make up.)

The author dispatches a powerful statement in which women stand as sole prostitutes in society. In fact, the statement falsifies reality because society is made up of male and female prostitutes. The statement tarnishes the image of women thereby creating unhealthy gender relations that threaten the society's well-being.

Mabasa tries to strike a balance in terms of gender bias by depicting Saba as an irresponsible and promiscuous character. Just like the several female characters he projects, Saba is also shown as being capable of infecting his wife with a deadly disease. He is a married man but brings a prostitute to his home and sleeps with her in the presence of his wife. Consequently, he infects his wife with a sexually transmitted infection. On page 100, Saba's wife says:

*Chokwadi kana ini ndikafa ndinenge ndauraiswa nemurume wangu. Chokwadi here asikana, mukore uno nemamiriro awo munhu ungapewo mukadzi wako chirwere chenjovhera?*



(Honestly, if I die it is all because of my husband. How can someone in this day and age infect his wife with an STI?)

Although the author is attempting to strike a balance, he did not use strong terms on males as compared to female characters. There is evidence of Saba's castigation for his behaviour. However, the author portrays more women negatively. Even though Saba is castigated for his behaviour the author portrays more women adversely.

The author also attempts to strike a balance by being biased against men in relation to their lack of proper planning skills. Male characters are said to have adopted strange names like Castle Great. This is observed by Vincent during one of his numerous visits to the University of Zimbabwe. The author states:

*Upenzi hwevakomana ndehwekupedzera mari kudoro. Handiti vamwe vakomana vakazenge vatopiwa sadza kuclinic kupera kweimwe term vasisina mari? Ivavo dzakanga dziri shasha dzekunwa doro paUniversity. Vaitove nemazita avo edoro: mumwe ainzi Mascud mumwe achininzi Castle Great (86).*

(The boys' madness lies in the manner in which they waste their money on beer. At one point some of them had to be given food at the clinic after they had squandered their money. These were well known for drinking beer at the University. Some of them had names of beer brands: one was Mascud and the other was Castle Great.)

The gender bias uncovered here is irresponsibility and lack of proper planning skills on the part of men. As a result of these neurotics, male students at the University of Zimbabwe ended up surviving on food and handouts from the local clinic.

Honestly, surviving on charity when you have a reasonable source of income is both dehumanising and disgraceful. Thus, to learn that male students were surviving on mercy is tantamount to begging and an assault on their dignity.

Although Mabasa's novel portrays men and women negatively, the gender bias is tilted in favour of men. The novel has more examples on the castigation of women than of men. Overall, gender bias in Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) largely blames women for the moral decadence bedevilling the country. That is detrimental to gender relations and nation building as women are regarded as a source of divisive social vices. However, the author should be applauded for his attempt to align irresponsible and dehumanising women's behaviour to the broad context of economic forces.

#### **5.4 Gender bias in *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo***

There is gender bias in Mutasa's *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* (2005) that is aimed at addressing the marginalisation of women in the society. The novel which operates by way of letters puts not only the land issue in Zimbabwe at the centre of the discourse but also the aspect of gender imbalances in terms of access to land and education in Zimbabwe.

Sekai is first denied education by her father who argues that educating her is waste of money. He argues that even if she eventually manages to work, all the money and resources acquired by her would be channelled to her husband. Matirasa, Sekai's elder sister states in a letter to her aunt who is taking a leading role in Sekai's education that, their father wants Sekai back without delay. She writes:

*Baba vamuka vachipengera amai nhasi uno...Zvanzi Sekai ngaadzoke izvozvi azorima...Chikoro ndechavakomana...Vati kupinza Sekai chikoro kurasa mari. Kana akashanda saticha, kana nesi, kana basa ripi zvaro haazodzose mari yavo. Upfumi hwekurasa nekuti anozoriritira varume vake isu tave marombe (14).*

(Father was angry today. In the morning he was saying to our mother, Sekai must come back now to work in the fields...He said education is for the boys because sending girls to school is a waste of money. If she later works as a teacher, nurse or any other job, she will not pay back his money but support her husband and his relatives leaving us destitute.)

The excerpt shows that Sekai's father is totally against educating the girl child. Sekai's father and his blood sister who is instrumental in Sekai's success used to have nasty face-to-face confrontations about the education of Sekai. In the face of the ever-mounting pressure, the aunt stands her ground and convinces her brother that it is worthwhile to educate Sekai. In a letter to Sekai's father on page 16, the aunt advises:

*Mwana waunoti haafaniri kupinda chikoro nokuti anozokukanganwa hauzivi  
here kuti anogona kuzokuchengeta nekukubatsirai?*

(Don't you know that the child whom you don't want to educate may look after you in future?)

These words of advice are a clear indication that, Sekai's aunt is determined to see Sekai acquiring education. She fights a tough battle and eventually wins.

Sekai, who almost lost her basic right to education, does not disappoint her aunt. She excels up to University level where she acquires a degree in Agriculture with a distinction. She is later employed as the country's Lands and Agriculture Officer. This proves that gender does not count when it comes to performance. To prove all her critics wrong, Sekai builds a nice house for her parents and another one for her aunt in addition to other infrastructural developments. On the day of the celebrations at Sekai's rural home, her father who used to oppose her education is overwhelmed by emotions due to happiness. Feeling guilty in front of people he says, "*Mwana uyu Sekai! Ndinomupa mombe!*" (This child Sekai! I will give her a beast.)

This was a way of thanking Sekai for helping them and being a role model in the local community. He even wants to ask for forgiveness from Sekai but the aunt tells him that it is not necessary. She assures him that everything is fine because Sekai does not hold grudge against him. The aunt can be said to possess exceptional leadership qualities because without her effort, Sekai's education which is now benefiting the family, the community and the nation at large could not have been realised. Later, Sekai has a wedding. Mutasa presents the subject of gender bias in a manner that encourages positive male-female relations, which is a pre-requisite for any society's development.

Sekai exhibits exceptional leadership qualities from her time at school and later at work. At Silveira High School, she shows profound leadership skills as the head girl when she attempts to repel the strike which was being instigated by the likes of Juwere. After boldly telling other learners that it was not appropriate to strike, she even gives an instruction, "*Ngatichidzokera muchikoro sezvo bhera rarira*" (6). (Lets go back to our classes since the bell has rung.)

That is a statement issued by a bold and firm leader who feels that she is in a position of authority. In this situation she is expected to side with striking learners but she refuses to budge and stands her ground. In fact, she is prepared to call a spade a spade. Such leadership qualities tend to lack, not only in students but also in some adults at work places.

Sekai even wins a prize for being a competent head girl at the end of year prize giving day. Praising Sekai the Headmaster says:

*Pano tanga tiine mwana anga achizvipira zvikuru. Tinotenda uye tinofara nebasa guru raakaita* (10).

(Here we have a learner who was very hard working. We are grateful for the job she has been doing.)

This is a clear testimony of Sekai's leadership skills. This implies that her track record is unquestionable. This way of writing goes a long way in conscientising people that gender does not count when it comes to performance in various spheres of life.

Sekai also represents the women folk that prove to the society that women are equally capable of taking leadership positions as evidenced by her role as Lands and Agriculture Officer. During a resettlement meeting of farmers in Gweru, Chikerema admires Sekai's competence and leadership skills. He says:

*Nhai iwe mwana mudiki so, uye uri munhukadzi, pfungwa idzodzi wakadziwana kupiko chaizvo? Kana isu vanhurume vakawanda vari pano, hatina njere dzakapinza saizvozvi (129).*

(You are a woman and so young. Where did you get this wisdom which all these men here do not have?)

This statement confirms Sekai's competency and unquestionable leadership skills as Lands and Agriculture Officer.

During the same meeting of resettled farmers in Gweru, a certain man is both thrilled and surprised by Sekai's leadership prowess as well as her knowledge in farming and jokingly offers to marry her. He jokingly proposes:

*Iwe mwana haungadi hako here kuroorwa neharahwa yakaita hayo seni inogona kuchengeta? Ndaona kuti iwe une ruzivo runodarika rwevanhurume vazhinji (121).*

(Girl, don't you want to be married by an old man like me who is able to look after you well? I am convinced that you have more knowledge than most men.)

This proves to the society that women are equally capable of leading competently as evidenced by Sekai's role as the Lands and Agriculture Officer.

The author emphasises the aspect of gender neutrality not only in the allocation of land but also in various spheres of social life. The character referred to only as “Amai” stands her ground when she is pushed to the periphery of the land that she is being allocated. Eventually she gets a piece of land she desires. In the same vein Sekai who is the Lands and Agriculture Officer reiterates at her meeting with farmers in Gweru that:

*Munhu wose ane kodzero yokunogara kuminda mirefu kwaanoda. Ino inyika yedu tose (116).*

(Every citizen has a right to be resettled. This is our country.)

This implies that there is supposed to be gender inclusivity in the Land Reform Programme. At one of the meetings, there is a time when people were reminded to shun divisive tendencies along gender lines because even the president always reminds the nation that the war of liberation was a combined effort. This underscores the author’s commitment to eradicate gender biases.

The title *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* dovetails with not only the equitable distribution of land but also the fact that gender is not a limiting factor when it comes to achievements. From the days she was at school, Sekai always had the desire to get a piece of land within the Land Reform Programme that was supposed to be beneficial to all citizens. After acquiring a degree in Agriculture, she obtains her own piece of land and distinguishes herself as a farmer who is capable of achieving food security for her family and the country at large. While touring her farm, a certain man is amazed. He says:

*Ko, nhai imi, mukadzi here uyu akarima zvakadai? Ko, zvariri bhunu chairo! Kurima here uku! (121).*

(People, is this person a woman who is able to farm like this? She is a real white commercial farmer. What a good farmer!)

This proves beyond any reasonable doubt that gender is not a barrier to one's achievement. The author's use of characters of all ages including the youthful and women as recipients of pieces of land is an indication of the bright future of a nation. Thus, every Zimbabwean citizen is entitled to the ownership of the means of production with particular reference to land that is distributed under the Land Reform Programme.

The equitable distribution of land and the subsequent achievement of Sekai in producing high yields as a commercial farmer is in tandem with the author's preamble. In his preamble, Mutasa says:

*Bhuku rino rakanyorwa nechinangwa chokujekesa kuti kuva musikana kana mudzimai hazvirevi kuti hamuna kuenzana nevanhurume.*

(This novel is written to show that to be a girl child or a woman does not mean that you are not equal to men.)

Sekai's farming capabilities bear testimony to the author's foreword. Indeed, she proves the point that being a woman does not mean that one is not equal to a man. Therefore, gender marginalisation should be done away with for it impacts negatively on gender relations and stifles family as well as national development.

Interviewee 3 said that by reciting the clan praise poem, the aunt shows great leadership qualities. She does not only take a leading role but also uses the appropriate register. Within the Shona traditional set up, only men are expected to recite the clan praise poem but in this novel, such gender marginalisation is done away with. A shift from the status quo proves to the society that women are equally capable of taking leadership roles. Thus, she is confident, articulate and knows the appropriate register when executing the task.

This implies that gender does not count when it comes to performance in many if not all spheres of social life. It is important to give women leadership roles which were traditionally reserved for men because they are equally capable. The author is applauded for

challenging the society to do away with some of its traditional values for they are counterproductive. Thus, what matters is capability as opposed to gender.

On the whole, Mutasa's novel is a masterpiece which champions women's emancipation. It also seeks to address the marginalisation of the girl child. Thus, the author presents the subject of gender bias in the best interest of social cohesion and national development. Projecting a positive male-female relationship is a pre-requisite for the society's well being.

### **5.5 Steps being taken by Zimbabwe's government to eradicate gender imbalances**

In line with Zimbabwe's need for gender inclusivity as well as eradicating discrimination along gender lines, a number of measures were instituted by the Zimbabwe government after independence. According to Chabaya and Gudhlanga (2001), Gudhlanga (2011), Gudhlanga and Chirimuuta (2012:33-36), Mutekwe and Zikhali (2012:42) and Mutekwe and Modiba (2015:1), some of the steps taken by the government of Zimbabwe to eradicate gender imbalances include:

- Introducing the policy of universal education in 1980. Under this policy, no one was supposed to be discriminated against in terms of race, sex, ethnicity and religious affiliation among others.
- Forming the Women's Affairs Ministry at independence which was later transformed into the Ministry of Youth, Gender and Employment Creation. The ministry was tasked to eradicate gender discrimination in all sectors of the society. It focused on exploring ways to provide gender equity, mainstreaming and inclusivity in all areas of development and to make women enjoy more citizenship rights.



- Passing the Legal Age of minority Act in 1982. According to this Act men and women were for the first time legally equal. Women were no longer minors.
- Passing the Equal pay Act in 1982. This meant that women employed to do the same job as men with the same qualifications would get equal salaries with their male counterparts.
- Adopting the National Gender Policy in 2004. The policy sought to address several critical challenges related to empowering girls and women in education, training, politics, the economy and decision making.

Another development that provides the impetus for gender inclusivity is that Zimbabwe is a signatory to regional and international bodies that aim to create and attain equity and equality between men and women. These include:

- The Southern African Development Community's Declaration on Gender and Development and its addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against women and Children.
- The SADC Ministerial Declaration of 2007 which stated that women should constitute 30% of decision making positions by 2011. This was later revised to 50% by 2015.
- The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The Convention on Civil and Political Rights.
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ECOSOCO).
- Convention on the Minimum Age of Marriage and Registration of Marriages.

Evidence from the above text analysis, questionnaire respondents and interview responses show that writers handle the aspect of gender differently. By portraying women negatively throughout their literary works of art, the authors of *Garandichauya*, *Zvibaye Woga* and *Mapenzi* tend to promote disunity between men and women which is detrimental to a

nation's development. For example, women are shown to be evil and solely responsible for family and societal disintegration. This negative portrayal tends to derail women's efforts in their struggle for a more just social order as well as their access to certain fundamental rights in society such as in education, politics and the economic sector. On the other hand, the author of *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* portrays women positively. He portrays them as people who can contribute significantly to a nation's economic development. This depiction enables society to realise that gender is not a factor when it comes to performance. By cultivating positive gender relations, the author elevates women to be subjects and not adjuncts in the activities on sustainable development in their communities. The government of Zimbabwe has also been found to be taking measures to eradicate gender inequalities which are prevalent in society. It instituted a raft of policies and ratified a number of regional and international conventions on human rights and gender issues in its quest to eradicate gender disparities.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented and analysed data gathered from text analysis, interview and questionnaire respondents. The data appeared in descriptive form. It was established from text analysis, interviews and questionnaire respondents that while some authors are championing the emancipation of women, others are reinforcing their marginalisation. While Mutasa's *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* (2005) is addressing the marginalisation of women, Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964), Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996) and Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) are perpetuating their negative portrayal in society. According to the study's findings, Zimbabwe has done much since 1980 in her quest to eradicate gender imbalances. That is evidenced by the policies that she has instituted so far. Furthermore, she is a signatory to regional and international conventions and declarations that aim to create and attain equity and equality between men and women.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **60 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the study that has been carried out on gender bias in selected Shona novels. The chapter gives a summary of the findings and recommendations that are pertinent and useful not only to the study of gender bias in Shona novels, but also to the important aspect of nation building that is central to this research. The study's aim was to uncover gender bias in Shona novels and examine how novelists present the subject. It sought to confirm whether authors are projecting positive male and female images which are a pre-requisite for social cohesion, society's well being and national development. This chapter shall be divided into the following sub-headings: summary of major findings, recommendations for this study and recommendations for further studies.

#### **6.1 Summary of major findings**

This study has established that there is gender bias in selected Shona novels but the manner in which authors present the subject differs. It was observed from the findings of questionnaire respondents, interviews and textual analysis of Mutasa's *Sekai: Minda Tave*

Nayo (2005), Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964), Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996) and Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) that not all authors are gender neutral. While Mutasa is gender sensitive and advocates for gender inclusivity in society, others namely, Chakaipa, Mukwazhi and Mabasa are perpetuating gender disparities. Mutasa's positive portrayal of females in his novel is consistent with feminists' argument that gender is just a social construct which can be replaced by power shifts depicting women as equal partners in many aspects of social life. Chakaipa, Mukwazhi and Mabasa portray women as largely destructive and incapable of contributing positively to the society's well being. The pattern of blaming and negatively portraying women throughout their literary works of art is evident. Thus, the majority of authors in this study's analysed Shona novels are not projecting positive female images which is a pre-requisite for social cohesion, society's well being and national development

The study has argued that Shona novels are part of the vehicles through which gender biases and imbalances can either be perpetuated or redressed in society. This is so because of their being readily available to the majority and also their use as set-books in schools from the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) through to "A" Level. They are among the leading forces in addressing society's stereotypes, contradictions, challenges as well as the patriarchal authority inherent in society. Positive attributes which aim to eradicate the marginalisation of women in society have been found to be lacking in *Garandichauya*, *Mapenzi* and *Zvibaye Woga*. These novels fall short of creating healthy gender relations. Rather, they engender power imbalances which are retrogressive to family and national prosperity. It is only *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* which manages to convincingly argue that women should not be disadvantaged on the basis of their biological make-up since their performance in many aspects of social life is at par with that of their male counterparts.

Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964) portrays Muchaneta and her mother negatively throughout the entire novel and does not make any attempt to depict them as people who are capable of contributing to the development of a society. Although the author is applauded for locating the predicament of characters within the broad context of the

economic forces prevailing at the time, the manner in which he presents the subject of gender bias leaves a lot to be desired. Castigating them throughout the entire literary work of art does not enhance cordial male-female relationships which is a prerequisite if society's development is to be realised.

Like Chakaipa, Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996) has abundant gender biases. Women are negatively portrayed throughout the novel. The author seems to be on a mission to blame females for the spread of STIs and AIDS that contemporary Zimbabwean society faces. This is evidenced by the exoneration of Cephas from any wrong doing even in situations where he was equally to blame. Mukwazhi seems not to consider the fact that sometimes women are victims of male treachery. This way of writing does not only widen but also perpetuates existing gender imbalances and the marginalisation of women in society.

In the vein of Chakaipa and Mukwazhi, Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999) has more examples of the castigation of women than men. Although the author should be applauded for his attempt to align irresponsible and dehumanising women's behaviour to the broad context of economic forces, he savaged women as irresponsible using derogatory terms including prefixes which carry overtones of criticism, sarcasm and caricature. Essentially, he castigates women for the moral decadence bedevilling the country. Surely, women cannot entirely be regarded as leading forces in exhibiting irresponsible behaviour with nothing positive to contribute to the nation. Despite his attempt to portray Mai Tanya as a victim of Saba, Mabasa falls short in that he blames her for having been impatient such that she ended up having an affair with Saba, a development that brought her problems later. On the whole, gender bias in Mabasa's *Mapenzi* is tilted in favour of men. It is evident that the manner in which the author presents the issue of gender bias is detrimental to gender relations and nation building as women are regarded as sources of divisive social vices.

On the other hand, there is overwhelming evidence in Mutasa's *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* (2005) that the marginalisation of the girl child is being addressed. The author's way of presenting the subject of gender bias champions women's emancipation which is a pre-

requisite for the society's well being. Vivid and abundant examples of the positive accomplishments of women enhance social cohesion and national development. This way of projecting a positive male-female relationship helps to solve the society's unjust practices.

From these findings, Zimbabwean Shona novelists can largely be said to be ineffective in promoting healthy gender relations. This is so because only one novelist out of four managed to project a positive male-female relationship which is a pre-requisite for national development. Hostile gender relations in Shona novels have the propensity to devalue, dehumanise, degrade and denigrate people in society resulting in them developing low self esteem. That is likely to affect their performance and achievement when carrying out assigned tasks. Low self esteem can also dampen people's morale and affect their career aspirations and choices. The gender that is portrayed positively tends to look down upon the one that is portrayed negatively and marginalise it in some aspects of social life. The denigrated gender cannot contribute meaningfully to the development of the society due to lack of opportunities caused by unequal power relations.

This study has also established that gender bias has its roots in primary socialisation where the family is responsible for constructing and perpetuating male dominance at an early age. Other factors such as religion, culture, the peer group, the mass media and education simply reinforce already constructed and existing gender imbalances and injustices that pervade many spheres of social life. Even colonialism can be said to have entrenched existing gender biases among the Shona people which were disguised as division of labour. Therefore, the family can be regarded as the root, origin and cause of gender bias among the Shona people in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwean Shona novels. This is so because authors are a product of patriarchal families and societies. Thus, authors did not grow up in a social vacuum.

## **6.2 Recommendations for this study**

The researcher recommends that Shona novelists should be sensitised through workshops, seminars or conferences so that they can write gender neutral novels. This would help the societies who are the consumers of Shona novels to be gender neutral through emulating the positive portrayal attributed to characters. Projecting positive accomplishments of men and women would enhance social cohesion and national development as people with boosted self-esteem tend to work harder than those without.

The Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC), teachers' colleges and universities should approve gender neutral Shona novels so that students can have appropriate role models to emulate. If they study gender sensitive Shona novels as set-texts/books, there is likelihood that they may also be gender sensitive writers. That can enhance gender relations in society which is a pre-requisite for a nation's development.

It is this researcher's submission that a lot still needs to be done by novelists in as far as constructive literature is concerned. The descriptive and blaming type of literature which does not offer any practical solutions to improve the lives of people cannot be a vehicle for people's emancipation. It is not enough for artists just to criticise but they should go beyond that and try to be corrective in their approach. This recommendation is a challenge to artists who should maintain their image as the guardians of society. In this case there is need for artists to be committed enough to give society a guiding philosophy or ideology that helps in solving their problems.

The researcher recommends that further studies on gender bias in Shona be carried out in other genres such as poetry, drama and short stories. Further research in these other genres should strive to project a positive male-female relationship so that unjust social

practices can be solved. Thus, further research should endeavour to show that the study of gender bias is corrective, motivating and beneficial to the society.

It is also this researcher's submission that those who choose to carry out research on gender bias should take a holistic approach. Research cannot be convincing if it does not factor in the perspective or social order of the time. Thus, considering the prevailing circumstances at the time renders the study credible.

### **6.3 Recommendations for further studies**

Further studies should be done to explore gender bias in several Shona novels and other genres. The reason for increasing the number of Shona novels is to find out if the trend is shifting from portraying women negatively throughout authors' literary works of art to projecting them as equally useful citizens in society. The focus will be on how novelists handle the aspect of gender bias in the best interest of cultivating healthy gender relations which is a pre-requisite for a nation's development.

### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has summarised the entire study. The findings of this study have shown that, while some authors are championing the emancipation of women others are perpetuating their marginalisation. Thus, the manner in which authors present the subject of gender should be in the best interest of national development. While measures taken by the Zimbabwean government to eradicate gender biases are commendable, more needs to be



done if the marginalisation of women is to be done away with. Recommendations arising from the findings of the study as well as recommendations for further studies were given.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Interview guide for authors of this research's primary sources**

This interview is intended to find out your views on gender bias in this study's selected Shona novels. The title of the dissertation is: Gender bias in selected Shona novels. Your novel is one of those selected for analysis in this study. Please feel free to answer all questions. All the information you give will be kept confidential.

1. What can you say was your aim for writing this novel?
2. Your novel has perceived gender issues. What inspired you to write about such issues in your novel?
3. Is your writing linked in any way to your personal experiences in society?
4. You seem to raise a number of problems caused by irresponsible behaviour of characters in your novel? What do you think are the solutions to those challenges?
5. How effective do you think the solutions you have raised can contribute to national development?
6. What could be the possible strengths and weaknesses of your negative or positive portrayal of males and females?
7. What do you think are the historical roots of gender bias among the Shona people?
8. What do you view as the causes of gender bias in pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe?
9. Do you think Zimbabwean Shona novelists are effective in promoting healthy gender relations? Motivate your answer.
10. Can hostile gender relations affect national development? In which way?
11. Suggest ways in which Shona novelists can contribute positively to the development of a nation.

12. Is the government of Zimbabwe responding to gender imbalances? Explain your answer by giving examples.
13. Can you comment about the title of your novel?

Thank you



## **Appendix 2: Interview guide for Shona literature lecturers and accomplished scholars**

This interview is intended to find out your views on gender bias in this study's selected Shona novels. The title of the dissertation is: Gender bias in selected Shona novels. Please feel free to answer all questions. All the information you give will be kept confidential. Questions are based on the following novels: Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964), Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999), Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996) and Mutasa's *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* (2005). If you did not read the novel, feel free to ignore questions about it.

1. There is perceived gender bias in the novels mentioned above. From your knowledge about the books, are authors projecting negative or positive male-female images? Give characters as examples.
2. Do you think Zimbabwean Shona novelists are effective in promoting healthy gender relations? Motivate your answer.
3. Can hostile gender relations affect national development? In which way?
4. Among the above authors, who do you think managed to write in the manner which you appreciate and admire? Motivate your answer.
5. Is the government of Zimbabwe responding to gender imbalances? Explain your answer by giving examples.
6. What do you think are the historical roots of gender bias among the Shona people?
7. What do you view as the causes of gender bias in pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe?
8. Do you think Zimbabwean Shona novelists are effective in promoting healthy gender relations? Motivate your answer.
9. Can hostile gender relations affect national development? In which way?

10. Basing your arguments from evidence in each of the above mentioned novels and from your own personal experiences, do you agree with the assertion that women should not be disadvantaged on the basis of their sexuality?
11. Suggest ways in which Shona novelists can contribute positively to the development of a nation.
12. Is the government of Zimbabwe responding to gender imbalances? Explain your answer by giving examples.

Thank you

### Appendix 3: Questionnaire guide for Shona literature students

This questionnaire is intended to find out your perceptions on gender bias in this study's selected Shona novels. The title of the dissertation is: Gender bias in selected Shona novels. May you please complete this questionnaire by filling in the blank spaces? Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for this study and not for any other purpose. Do not write your name. Please feel free to answer all questions. I thank you in advance for your assistance in this research. Questions are based on the following novels: Chakaipa's *Garandichauya* (1964), Mabasa's *Mapenzi* (1999), Mukwazhi's *Zvibaye Woga* (1996) and Mutasa's *Sekai: Minda Tave Nayo* (2005). If you did not read the novel, feel free to ignore questions about it.

Tick the appropriate response

1. Sex: (A) Male ☐ (B) Female ☐

2. Age

- |                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| (A) Below 20 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (B) 20-30 years    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (C) 30-40 years    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (D) 40-50 years    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (E) Above 50 years | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. There are perceived gender biases in the novels mentioned above. From your knowledge about the books, are authors projecting negative or positive male-female images? Give characters as examples.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Do you think Zimbabwean Shona novelists are effective in promoting healthy gender relations? Yes ☐ No ☐ Motivate your answer using the above mentioned novels.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
5. Hostile gender relations affect national development.  
 Agree ☐ Disagree ☐  
 If you agree, explain in which way? Derive your examples from the above mentioned novels  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
6. Among the above authors, who do you think managed to write in the manner which you appreciate and admire? Substantiate your answer.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
7. Is the government of Zimbabwe responding to gender imbalances? Explain your answer by giving examples.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
8. What do you think are the historical roots of gender bias among the Shona people?.....

- .....
- .....
- .....
9. What do you view as the causes of gender bias in pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe?.....
- .....
- .....
- .....
10. Do you think Zimbabwean Shona novelists are effective in promoting healthy gender relations? Motivate your answer with examples from the novels mentioned above or any other novel you have read before
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
11. Can hostile gender relations affect national development? In which way? You can use characters from the above mentioned novels to support your point of view.....
- .....
- .....
- .....
12. Basing your arguments from evidence in each of the above mentioned novel and from your own personal experiences, do you agree with the assertion that women should not be disadvantaged on the basis of their sexuality?
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

13. Suggest ways in which Shona novelists can contribute positively to the development of a nation.....

.....  
.....  
.....

14. Is the government of Zimbabwe responding to gender imbalances? Explain your answer by giving examples.....

.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you